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To Emma.

With a Merry Christmas
From Lizzie.
1880.

SHAKESPEARE'S DREAM

AND

OTHER POEMS.

SHAKESPEARE'S DREAM

AND

OTHER POEMS.

By

WILLIAM LEIGHTON,

AUTHOR OF "THE SONS OF GODWIN," "CHANGE," ETC.

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SHAKESPEARE'S DREAM.

Here are but phantoms : do not blame
These flitting ghosts because they bear
No more the eager hearts of flame
And grace of life, their wont to wear.

TO

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE.

Nor boldly, but with reverent heart, come I
Where your sublime and bright creations dwell
In the enchanted land of poetry,
O King of Bards ; and if I seek to tell—
Alas, so poorly !—how your wondrous spell
Hath quickened wayward fancies in my brain
Till there they hold bewildering carnival,
'Tis no vainglorious thought that prompts my strain,
And summons to my verse your grand and lovely train.

Perhaps 'twere wiser if all silently
I held each shape in fond, impassioned thought,
Nor vainly breathed the words that come to me
With love or pathos, mirth or grandeur, fraught ;
For in my utterance all their power is naught ;
But yet I am impelled, I know not why ;
And half their passion hath my bosom caught.
Then bid me not be still ; I fain would try
To paint the scenes that flit before my mental eye.

Oh that my Muse might dip her laboring wings
In magic fountains of enchantment bright,
And grandly rise, as from Pierian springs,
To bear my verse a worthier, nobler flight !
But in these days e'en Poesy seems trite,
And Fancy dull,—the twain that to you came,
Bright spirits glorious in their robes of light.
Oh, may the critics spare my verse the blame ;
It is this sober age that makes my words so tame !

In caves of Delphi, in an olden day,
They sought Apollo's oracle to wake ;
Prophetic vapors rose mysteriously,
While all the mighty mountain seemed to quake
When in her ecstasy the Pythia spake ;
And priests were there to frame in rhythmic line
Each awful prophecy her lips might make.
Mute now the voices of the Delphic shrine ;
But from your temple, Shakespeare, ring a Pythia's cries
divine.

Nor do your numbers tell in doubtful way,
As once Apollo's priests, with cunning art ;
But yet like them you tune to melody
The wild responses of the human heart.
O Reader of Mankind, it is your part
To show us where the springs of action lie,
Unfolding life before us like a chart ;

While from your creatures warning voices cry
In oracles more true than came of Pythia's ecstasy.

Weirdly prophetic are the tones that rise
Macbeth's black guilt and punishment to tell ;
And all the demon sisters' sorceries
Are voices whispering from the deeps of hell :
From wronged Othello's words we learn full well
What pangs of misery his heart assail,
Who writhes in Jealousy's tormenting spell ;
And Hamlet's mental powers are but the veil
Of poisoning faults through which his proud intentions
fail.

Through all the action of each moving scene
We hear the Pythia's wild, responsive cries ;
While in each pause, her ecstasies between,
The poet's notes of melody arise :
Nor e'er Apollo from Olympian skies
Sent through his priestess' shrieks so true reply
To his fond worshippers' empassioned sighs
As breathes, O Shakespeare, from your poesy,
The questionings of the soul to still and satisfy.

PERSONS OF THE MASQUE.

SHAKESPEARE.

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.	CORDELIA.
PROSPERO.	KENT.
MIRANDA.	A SINGER.
CALIBAN.	OTHELLO.
SPIRITS OF THE ISLAND.	CLEOPATRA.
ECHIO.	ANTONY.
ARIEL.	BENVOLIO.
MACBETH.	MERCUTIO.
LADY MACBETH.	JULIET.
GHOST OF KING DUNCAN.	ROMEO.
THE WEIRD SISTERS.	SHYLOCK.
OPHELIA.	BASSANIO.
POLONIUS.	PORTIA.
HAMLET.	PUCK.
KING RICHARD III.	OBERON.
GHOSTS.	TITANIA.
KING LEAR.	FAIRIES.

SHAKESPEARE'S DREAM.

SCENE.

[*Stratford. A summer-house. Through the trees can be seen the banks of the Avon, some arches of a stone bridge, picturesque groups of elms and willows, and, rising over all, the graceful spire of Holy Trinity Church. SHAKESPEARE is sitting, looking out meditatively on the beautiful river scenery.*]

SHAKESPEARE.

Bright Avon, still your gentle stream flows on
As peacefully as in remembered days
Of old: as then your glimmering ripples caught
The golden sunbeams, so they glitter now,
And laugh in sport of merry wantonness,
Kissed by the touches of the warm South-wind.
That wind is redolent with balmy breath
Of sweet rose-blossoms and the meadows' bloom:
And down the winding river-banks it stirs
Sedges and willows in the delicate haze
That hangs its shimmer in the evening air,
Till like the glamour of enchantment seems

The loveliness of this sweet, summer eve.
What fond remembrances come back to me
Of childhood's days!—A careless-hearted boy,
Through the green meadows by this peaceful river
I wandered, carolling blithely as the robin
Or the gay lark that sang the hymn of day.
But the boy's heart, in which that morning hymn
Wakened responses gay as song of lark,
Hath felt so many solemn thrillings since,
And on its quivering strings the world hath beat
Such fierce, wild music, that a deeper tone
Than then it knew sounds through its memories.
Boyhood—how often hath my art essayed
To fill the scope of all that boyhood feels;
And yet the fullest measure something lacked,
While the weird mystery of life reserved,
Even in the simple bosom of a child,
Secrets beyond the nicest touch of art!
Boyhood—the pictures that its magic wrought
Were fair beyond all artist-pencillings;
And its young eyes saw all things in the spell
Of its own witchcraft: beauty, grandeur, awe,
Sweet peace, vague terror, grace, and majesty
Whispered mysteriously their messages
From river, sky, tree, flower, and song of bird.

And when blithe boyhood passed to man's estate
My heart was ever filled with fervent song;

And fair and wonderful visions haunted me :
Out of the past its history and marvels
Came, with strange pictures, to delight my brain
And summon there a troop of images
To mock reality. The hearts of men
Were set in crystal cases, for I saw
Within each bosom all its passion-struggles ;
Beneath the customary forms of speech
And modes of action, in the deeps of thought,
I marked how one great master-vice—or virtue—
Subjecting to itself all other aims,
Would, like a tyrant, over lesser passions
Hold sovereignty ; or in divided souls
Saw Vice and Virtue each by turns hold sway ;
Or the mad tumult of the wild emotions,
Like noisy citizens of a republic,
Meet every issue with vociferous votes.

Goddess of Poesy, forgive me that
Not yet my muse hath woven into song
Thy praise in such full numbers as should tell
Of thee. It is not that my heart is cold,
Or turns from thee, or that I have forgot
How at thy touch the dullest things of earth—
Gray rocks, bleak wastes, the mountain, and the moor :
Rough, tangled woods ; dank fen, and stagnant pool—
All wake at thy commandment, and put on
Fair forms of beauty, or mysteriously

Whisper romances of a world revealed
But to a chosen few,—thy votaries.

Much have I sung of men, O Poesy,
Of whirling eddies in the stream of life,
Of foam that sparkles brightly on its waves,
And of the stronger currents that beneath
Bear on the living flood. Now I would sing
Of thee; would wander by this lovely river,
Among the flowers that bloom in pleasant meadows,
As in my days of boyhood; feel again—
If yet the world and cruel Art have left
Me sense to feel the kindly heart of Nature—
The beauty and the sweetness come to me,
And in my heart the universal heart rejoice.

Oh that I might, Prometheus-like, breathe fire
Into those deeper thoughts that lie beneath
The little deeds of men: so would my song
Rise grandly sweeping with an epic flight
Above the wars of kings! But yet, alas!
No art can paint the raptures of the soul
Whose iris-hues reflect the lights of heaven;
And words are colorless and formless, too,
And from the artist's pencil useless fall,
If he would have them wear the tints and shapes
Of fervent dreams. So must my theme sublime
Put on the dress and colors of the world,—

A goddess clothed in common gown of serge.
Ah! may there not be lands afar in climes
Where Nature, far more prodigal than here
She plays the niggard, hath bent down to men
Her gracious presence fond and motherly,
And, in a kiss celestial pressed upon
Some lovely island, given there the key
I vainly seek to unlock her mystery?
Shall I then wander in adventurous voyage
To foreign, far-off strands, and bid the sea
Open for me its vast and azure gates,
And golden shores appear beyond the gleam
Of flashing waves? Ah, no! The deep, wide sea
That hides discovery from my dazzled eyes
Is but the dulness of mortality
That clothes my soul with coat of earthiness;
And if I fly to lands beyond Cathay
Still must I bear with me my robe of earth,
And be as far from Nature's purest self
As now I am. Here must I still remain,
And, as the smelter wins from filthy ore
Pure drops of gold, refine what here I find,
In glowing furnaces of heart and brain,
Until from dross the virgin metal runs.

I would forget the busy world of men
And all the puppets that my art hath fashioned
To picture life; but proud, imperious Art,

If once evoked to be a slave, soon bursts
The brittle bondage of her gilded chains,
And forges from them stronger manacles
To bind us hers forever. Images
That I have called will not depart at bidding ;
Nor can I banish haunting troops of shadows
Whose mimic acts have aped humanity,
Wrought busy plans, received the strokes of fate,
Loved, laughed, wept, stormed, or sighed their hour away.
Evoked from immaterial realms of thought,
Each fancy dons a garb of grave or gay,
Then claims substantial being from its dress,
Flaunting in crowded halls of memory
Through which it flits,—a most persistent ghost.
These are to me no less a living world
Than is the bustling throng who think that life
Means flesh, and bone, and breath, and meat, and drink.
A spectre-world, it closely clings to me ;
And when the prompter, Memory, rings his bell,—
Rings in my own despite,—quick at his call
Each figure, in stage-dress, steps briskly forth
And acts his part as he was wont to do.
Nor am I haunted only by old forms ;
New fancies, by the cruel hand of Art,
Take, each, dramatic shape, and bear themselves
Ever like actors on a mimic stage.
So am I wearied with the rigid lines
That Art hath fixed ; and all my toil of years

Hath built an enchanted palace, where I dwell
Shut in from liberty by gilded bars.
Oh, for the heart of boyhood that knew not
Of art, but worshipped beauty as the radiance
Of truth; nor dreamed of heavy, galling chains
That years, by force of habits, forms, and fashions,
Would hang upon the soaring wings of Fancy,
Dragging her fluttering pinions down to earth!
Now while I close my eyes my people come,—
My world that yet I love, and yet would lose,
Would weep to lose, and weep to lose it not.

[*He falls asleep.*]

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.

*Depart, depart
From weary heart,
O watchful thoughts of anxious care!
Let eyelids close,
And calm repose
Come with its sweet oblivion there!—*

*Oblivion deep,
Of drowsy sleep,
From life's grim shapes of threatening harm;
While peaceful Rest,
O'er troubled breast,
Pours Nature's sweet and healthful balm.*

*Behold, we fling
A magic ring
Of visioned shapes before his mind,
And fancies gay
In elfin play,
With shadowy memories intertwined.*

*Each laughing elf
Now clothes himself
In fashion that familiar seems ;
His merry task
To join the masque,
And weave the tangled web of dreams.*

*Grotesquely sad,
Or wildly mad,
Each spirit plies his mimicry ;
Yet oft among
The mingling throng
Some calmer shapes appear to be .*

*Or through the dream
The figures seem
Enacting life most soberly ;
Yet ever seen,
Each act between,
Glide the weird forms of fantasy.*

*From caverns deep,
Where memories sleep,
Come back, ye children of his brain !
The gay, the sad,
The good, the bad,
Come back and play your parts again !*

*Once more your strife
Of mimic life
Whirl through the dusky halls of sleep !
O wondrous train,
Come back again,
And through his dreaming visions sweep !*

[*Out of a chaos of fitting shapes* PROSPERO and MIRANDA *appear.*]

PROSPERO.

We are but creatures, child, of an enchantment ;
Our isle, ourselves, fine spirits of the air,
And baser forms of earth have all arisen
Out of imagination, which I hold
To be a magic world of sorcery.
My wizard robe, Miranda,—thus inwrought
With colors, figures, all these blazoned signs,—
Belongs unto a realm less powerful
Than that of marvellous Fancy. We have sprung
Out of a poet's brain ; yet are we not
Offspring of him alone, but we may claim

A long and noble line of ancestry :
No fancy but it hath paternity ;
Fancies are born of fancies, as our thoughts
Of thoughts ; and all beginnings are so far
We cannot find where we may safely say,
Here hath come forth of nothing a new thing.
The new is ever but a growth ; its seed
As early as the earliest dawn.—But, child,
You do not heed me.

MIRANDA.

Yes, dear sir, I do ;
But grieve to think I am not of that world
Whose wondrous history you have related,
And how we parted from it, and came here
To this so happy isle ; and which, indeed,
Since that your magic art hath hither brought
These shipwrecked people, I have partly seen.

PROSPERO.

Those you have seen are such as you, my child.
Reality ? I know not where to seek
That unknown thing. But be you comforted.
Why should you grieve ?

MIRANDA.

That I am but a shadow
A fancy—as you say—of poesy.

PROSPERO.

What would you other? Yours a happy fate;
For you have youth and all its golden hopes,
The sunshine and the brightness of our isle;
Nor any sorrow save by sympathy
With those less happy than yourself. Why grieve?

MIRANDA.

I cannot tell; but while you spake I seemed
Shut out from those to whom I would be near
By some strange bar.

PROSPERO.

There is no bar, my child,
Between you and the world. You are all love,
All tenderness, all sympathy with beauty,
With goodness, and the fond delights of youth.
So hath the poet framed you in whose heart
The bliss of love's ecstatic dream is made
Immortal. Nothing of love's sweet tenderness
That comes to mortal bosoms is not yours,
And yours forever.

MIRANDA.

O wise sir, and you?—
Are you, too, happy?

PROSPERO.

I am a prophecy
Of what is ever in the hearts of men.
As you are love, so am I mastery
Of spirits of the air, of earth, of ocean ;
The sovereignty of earth by knowledge,—more :
The power to force her most discordant voices
To such intelligent speech as shall unlock
The gates of mystery, and utter forth
The secrets over which she hath been brooding
Since the gray dawn of Time. As you had birth
Of the heart's dearest longings, I can trace
My ancestry from every bolder thought
That dared to rise above the plain of life
In voices of old singers, sage and bard.—
You ask if I am happy. My dear child,
My joy is not like yours, yet, of its kind,
A happiness. Here cometh one to whom
I will repeat your question.

[Enter CALIBAN.]

MIRANDA.

Caliban ?

PROSPERO.

Ay, that dull brute. Ho, Caliban ! ho, slave !
Tell me if you are happy.

CALIBAN.

Happy?

[Mutters to himself.]

Ay,

When your tormenting sprites molest me not.

PROSPERO.

What! do you murmur that your evil acts
Bring chastisement to turn your ways to good?

[To MIRANDA.]

He thinks that conscience pricks at my command.

[To CALIBAN.]

But answer me. When are you happiest?

CALIBAN.

When I have eaten of the purple grapes
That hang their clusters from the blasted oak
Loaded with vine, that hangs above the brook;
And when I sit at eve beneath the tree,
And the soft breeze from cool, salt waves comes in
Fanning my cheeks; while lovingly great leaves
Flap round my face as branches of the vine
Reach down to kiss me, and the sweet of blossoms
Comes to my nostrils with each balmy breath—
Then looking out into the western sea
That shines with gold from the low-hanging sun,

A glistening track up to the singing waves
That sparkle on my feet—then I am happy,
Thinking how sweet life is ; and fall asleep.

PROSPERO.

Most happy when asleep !

CALIBAN.

Unless you send
An ugly dream to worry or affright me.

PROSPERO.

Doth this thing dream ? I thought his brain too sluggish.
What dream you, slave ?

CALIBAN.

Sometimes that noisy waves
Toss me upon the rocks and hurt my limbs,
Or that they whirl me swiftly on the sands,
And, ere I gain my feet, drag me again
Into the deep ;—sometimes that angry bees
Hum in my ears. But sometimes, worse than these,
I dream one dream that often plagues my sleep.

PROSPERO.

What is this dream ?

CALIBAN.

Nay, master, do not bid
Me tell it; for whenever it hath crept
Into my thoughts, that night I dream of it.

PROSPERO.

Slave, tell your dream.

CALIBAN.

I beg you, mighty master,
Make me not tell it;—see, I kiss your foot
And hers, although she shrinks from me as if
My kiss upon her foot would soil its beauty.

PROSPERO (*raising his wand*).

Slave, tell your dream.

CALIBAN.

O pity, pity, master!

[PROSPERO *touches him with his wand*.]

I must obey.—I thought the sun had baked
The earth to dryness; even the shadowed brook
Where I was wont to drink had shrunk away;
I was athirst, and crept along its bed,
Thinking to find a mouthful of cool drink

Left in some pool: so, while I crept, I thought
I entered a deep cavern where the light
Shone only through a cleft in the high rocks.
Around were strewn huge bones, as if some beast
Had here a den; and through the dark I peered,
Thinking to meet the glare of fiery eyes
Fixed on me; but no eyes met mine, nor sound
Came to my ear. When now my straining sight,
Accustomed to the darkness, clearer grew,
I saw before me in the cavern's gloom,
Partly revealed by straggling rays of light,
And partly hidden by uncertain shadows,
A monstrous shape that made me thrill with horror.
A giant skeleton its mighty bones
Stretched on the floor, and leaned against the wall.
There in grim death the mouldy monster sat,
And grinned upon me from its fleshless skull;
And seemed to say, although it had no voice,
"I am thine ancestor; and long ago
I was the lord of this fair island; here
I made my den; here dragged the beasts I killed—
Behold their bones!—behold in me, thyself!"
I could not move, nor speak; but sat and gazed
On him that seemed to sit and gaze on me.
Then suddenly I heard, beyond the cavern,
Faintly the magic voices of the spirits
That haunt this island; and I knew they sang
And danced upon the sands: their melody,

Piercing the gloom and silence of the cavern,
Turned all my horror into misery ;
For they were spirits filled with grace and song,
And I, a brute confronted with this shape
Of grisly death, this mockery of my life,
Caught nothing from their joy but bitterness.
Then, as it seemed to me, the monstrous thing
On which I gazed grew sorrowful, while I
Drew from its sadness deeper misery,
Until hot, passionate tears burst from my eyes ;
And on the rock I beat myself awake ;
But with such tremor of my limbs and storm
Of heart-throbs that my frightful dream appeared,
Although invisible, to haunt me still.

MIRANDA.

Alas, poor brute !—although I shudder at him,
Yet am I pitiful he is not all
A brute. What greater misery than sense
To know the wretchedness of lack of sense !

PROSPERO.

This sense comes to him only in his dreams :
You heard the creature say that he is happy.
This is the type, Miranda, of mankind
In early savagery. In this rude being
Is seen the first faint dawn of larger thought

Than comes of brutal sense and an inheritance
Of instinct ; but his twilight of the mind,
Obscured by stormy passions, rude desires,
And all the cravings of an animal nature,
Though it may kindle vague, ambitious thoughts,
Can bring his bosom little happiness.

MIRANDA.

Is he no happier for his glimpse of reason ?

PROSPERO.

The birth of knowledge comes with labor-pains
Whose only joy is in the promises
Of the new birthling. His posterity
May reap the joys that are denied to him,
As a young heir wins pleasures from the hoards
His miser-ancestor by pains amassed.

MIRANDA.

Have you not said, my father, he is happy ?

PROSPERO.

Ay, child ; this creature hath his source of pleasure
In the inheritance kind Nature yields
To all her thousand tribes of living things :
The joys of vital powers and appetites,

Sweet breath of life, and glory of the sunshine.
He is so much a savage yet to draw
No happiness from dawn of intellect,
That shoots its rays across his mental fogs
With such uncertainty bewildered thought
Hath not the power to lift his muddy brain
To joys of understanding.

MIRANDA.

Alas, poor creature!—
But listen, father, all the air is filled
With floating melody.

CALIBAN.

My dream! my dream!
The song of spirits dancing on the sands!
Hark! I can hear the tinkle of their feet,
Mingled with murmurs of the plashing waves!

SPIRITS OF THE ISLAND.

Come, fairies, and dance in our elfin ring!—
Come, every sprite,
To sands that are shining where moonbeams fling
Their silver light!

[At the close of each verse ECHO repeats the last line.]

We will sail in a shallop of mother-of-pearl
Gayly afloat ;
And merrily laugh when a wavelet's curl
Breaks over our boat.

The waves, how they leap on the gleaming sand
To join our play !
They come with a rush and a plash to the strand ;
Then dance away.

And over our heads in the blue of night
Some merry star
Will suddenly shoot with its arrow of light
Gleaming afar.

Come out, O come out in the sweet moonshine,
And join our fun !—
Come, elf, sprite, and goblin, and fairy fine,
Every one !

Come, naiad and dryad, from fountain and tree !—
Come out ! come out !
O who are so happy and gay as we !
Shout ! fairies, shout !

And listen how mockingly Echo replies,
How tauntingly
With sweetest of voices returning our cries
Over the sea.

Come out on our pavement of diamonds bright,
O dancing fays!
Come out where the glittering lamps of the night
Fling down their rays!

Our roof is the arch of the wonderful skies
That high uphold
On their marvellous ceiling rich traceries
Of silver and gold.

On its murmuring margin the many-toned sea
With rhythmic beat
Is singing sweet measures of symphony
For our dancing feet;

And even the face of the Moon so fair,—
See! fairies, see!—
How she looks as she would, had she courage to dare,
Be gay as we!

Come down on a ladder of silver rays,
Diana bright!—
O come down, sweet Dian, and join our plays
To-night! to-night!

ECHO (*each time more faintly*).

To-night—to-night—to-night.

PROSPERO.

What ho, my Ariel, come ! bright spirit, come !

[*Enter ARIEL.*]

ARIEL.

Hail, master ! From the elfin ring I come
At your command. Though you have set me free,
Yet out of love and old obedience,
Dear master, will I hasten to the task
You bid me. Shall I chase the sunset's glow,
And bring you the gay tints of gold and purple
With which it painted all the burning West?
'Tis far off now ; but I can bring it you—
Or will you have the glimmer of yon star
That seaward shoots ? Or shall I rob the moon
Of her bright veil that, like a bride, she wears
Over her face to-night ? I pray you, master,
Give me a task most difficult, that I
May show my love.

PROSPERO.

Brave spirit, not to-night
Your nimble wing must sweep the sky for me.
Tell me and my fair daughter of this isle
Ere the wild waters cast us on its shore,
And your own history before the witch
Shut you in prison of the riven tree.

ARIEL.

Long ages on ages—I know not how long—
Had passed on this island in eons of song :

Gay birds on the tree-tops, on flowers the wild bees,
The murmur of surges, the hymn of the breeze,—

Sweet voices of nature, and full of delight,
Commingling with music of fairy and sprite ;

And when from the storm-clouds the wild tempests rang,
Like the braying of trumpets the sea-demons sang.

Here dwelt we, blithe spirits, contented and free :
Elf, fairy, and goblin, shy nymphs of the tree ;

Ouph, naiad, and pixy, quaint sprites of the sea ;
No people more merry, more happy than we.

One night—can I ever forget the turmoil ?—
The fiercest of tempests swept over our isle :

The sky and the billows were mingled and dun,
And the bolts of the thunder resounded as one ;

The deep, rocky grottos, whence springeth our isle,
Were filled with strange roarings, and trembled the while.

We crept into caverns, mute, frozen with fear,
And deemed that of all things the ending was near ;

And beside us were crouching, all dumb with affright,
Our playmates,—the spirits of storm and of night ;

For the grasp of a demon more mighty than they
Over earth, air, and ocean was holding his sway.

More fierce grew his raging, more mighty his arm,
Till our island seemed swinging like storm-twisted palm.

Then thought we that Nature, in frenzy of pain,
Was dissolving in darkness and chaos again.

At length came the morning ; the tumult was o'er ;
Once more the sweet sunlight was flooding our shore.

But, hark ! What loud summons sends forth its weird call ?
Piercing deepest of caverns, it cryeth to all.

We heard it, affrighted ; crept forth to the morn,
To behold on our island a horrible form.

It was Sycorax,—she of witches most foul,—
Whom the ocean brought hither with terrible howl.

I know not the source of her power o'er us all ;
But she made us her servants to come at her call.

Full foul were her labors, and fierce was her spell,
Till every tasked spirit was forced to rebel.

Then, with infinite cunning and cruelty nice,
She fashioned strange torments of wicked device.

No more in the moonshine we danced as before,
Nor chased the bright billows that broke on the shore ;

No more, when the sunset was shining with gold,
Our songs of rejoicing we sang as of old ;

But out of each tree-trunk came moanings of pain
That each rock and each grotto re-echoed again.

Once more the wild tempest rung loud overhead,
And in calm of the morning the foul witch was dead.

She had died, and had left us imprisoned in pain,
And I deemed that I never might loosen her chain.

But the same fateful waters that hither had borne
The witch brought thee, master, one sunshiny morn—

Brought thee and thy infant to bless us, and save
From the witch's strong fetters, from each living grave.

And now o'er our island once more the soft breeze
Is floating the music of song through the trees ;

Once more the gay billows that break on the strand
Are mocked by the dancing of elves on the sand.

To thee, my dear master, our blessings belong ;
It is thou hast re-wakened the spirit of song.

MIRANDA.

Bright Ariel, thanks. Too gay a nature thine
To moan in torture of the cruel pine.

CALIBAN.

Ho, ho ! My mother built his lodging well—
Cursed be the hand that loosed her magic spell !

ARIEL.

Nay, Caliban ; I never did you ill
That you should wish me in my prison still.

PROSPERO.

Brute, do you dare to fling your curse at me ?
What prompts your heart to such malignity ?

CALIBAN.

I hate his songs that bring the memory
Of bitter dreams and all my misery ;
I wish him back again within his tree,
Shouting his sorrows to the mocking sea.

MIRANDA.

O Caliban, is your wild heart so rude
That it would do no creature any good?

ARIEL.

What harsh and savage thoughts to him belong
Whose cruel nature hates the voice of song!

[PROSPERO, MIRANDA, and ARIEL retire a little distance, and CALIBAN comes forward.]

CALIBAN.

For that I am no nearer to their fashion
Of shape and spirit,—no graceful sprite of air,
No large intelligence, no soul of love,—
They call me brute, and look on me with scorn.
Where is the fault? I have not made myself;
It is a blemish in the work of nature,—
A fault of him, the master of this island,
Who found me howling with my brother-brutes,
And taught me only so much wit to know
I am a brute. If I could choose my place,

I'd rather be all brute, as once I was,—
The savage ranger of this fertile island,
With only instincts and wild appetites,—
Than bear the torture of my dreams, and strive
With cruel mystery of puzzling thoughts.
I suit not with these fair, fine-talking folk,—
My master, and his maid, and fairy shapes
That wait on them. I'll hide me in the woods,
And climb the hills, and watch the silver sea
Of morning-fog stretch brightly round the rocks
And clumps of trees,—its islands. When the sun
Burns up my cloudy ocean, like the deer
Or lazy bears I'll couch me in the thickets,
Hear merry, piping birds sing overhead,
And coax shy squirrels to be friends with me
By gifts of nuts: they are my brother-brutes,
And fit companions for the witch's child.
They will not hurt nor vex me, but be kind,
And love me for the good I do to them;
And I'll be master, and they Calibans.
Sometimes, at midnight, on the haunted beach
I'll mark upon the sand a magic ring,
And whisper spells will call up Setebos,
And make him bring me charms of wicked might:
And these I'll set in Prosper's way to vex him,
Or make a snare of them to catch the feet
Of nimble Ariel. I am lord of this island,
And I'll make wars and stratagems against them.

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.

*Fly, ye phantoms ; fly back to the dim regions where
The creations of eld now their dwelling are holding ;
Where the demons of thought—be they ugly or fair—
Are lost in the past from the present's beholding.*

*Fly back to your comrades,—the marvellous crew
That into the limbo of fancies are cast ;
Now as real as the things that were stable and true
For one moment alone, ere they merged in the past.*

*Lo ! out of that limbo come forth a dread pair—
Behold how the skies of our Dreamland grow black !
Obscure and yet lurid becometh the air,
While Murder's red finger is pointing their track.*

[PROSPERO, MIRANDA, ARIEL, and CALIBAN fade away, and in their place
appear MACBETH and his wife.]

LADY MACBETH.

Your spectres are but empty images.
What should we fear? What can they do to us?
Why, let them come, like mummers as they are,
And put on grimmest aspects. Dear my lord,
It is the spirit of melancholy in us

Dresses these things. So think of them, dear lord :
The shapes that your own broodings summon up,
The children of your brain, begot of Conscience
And timid Memory. They do not walk
Here in the air, as we do, but are creeping
Through crooked streets and alleys of your brain,
Impostors and base counterfeits of what
You would not fear if each dim shape were crammed,
As once, with all the gross, material substance
And vital force that go to make up life.

MACBETH.

We cannot make our spirits grave or gay
For reasons howsoever good, but still
Are governed by our tyrant dispositions
And an uncertain humor. I am plagued
With these dim spectres that encompass me
With shapes of gloom : nor can I fly from them,
Nor look on them without a chill of horror.
This is the frightful punishment of crime,
The burden conscience puts upon my heart.

LADY MACBETH.

Conscience is but a counsellor of the reason,
And, in its function, a subordinate ;
Why should it play the tyrant ? So the hand
Might wage a war against the other parts,

And ruin all. That which you call yourself
Hath right supremacy, and all the passions,
With conscience, judgment, reason, should be servants
Unto its lordly will.

MACBETH.

So am I punished
For usurpation by a like offence
Against myself. It is the better part
Within me which cries out against the ill,
And though that ill be crowned, will not be silent;
But ever cries, and opens wide the doors
Of the dim realm where strange imaginations
And fancies wander, that distressful ghosts
May come to haunt me with their spectral shapes.

[*Enter GHOST OF KING DUNCAN.*]

See where the old king stands with piteous looks!
O, I would give the crowns of all the kingdoms
Of earth—if they were mine—that yon sad ghost
Might rest in peace, and trouble me no more!

GHOST OF KING DUNCAN.

From solemn deeps
Where silence sleeps,
And dim, uncertain realms that lie
Beyond the reach of mortal eye,
With dress of gloom

And voice of doom,
A grim night-wanderer, come I,
A murderer's soul to terrify;—
Yet am not he your cruel hand
Cut basely off from high command.

I am your act,
The dismal shadow of a fact,
A fantasy
Of memory;
Of your own being I am part,
A brand from out your burning heart.
He in whose shape you see me dressed
Is happy now among the blessed;

But hapless he
Whose misery
Knows not an instant's rest,
Bearing unceasing torture in his breast;
Who daily, nightly lives in fear;
Whose coward eyes around him peer
To watch what fiend is lurking near
To snatch his soul
From life's control,
And plunge it where all demons be
In sulphurous billows of that sea
That ever laves
With burning waves
The murderer's soul eternally.

[GHOST *disappears*.]

MACBETH.

How hath the heart, by torturing flames oft seared,
The sense to feel their burning? I have dwelt
So long with spectres that each dismal shape
Should seem to me as a familiar thing,
And move me not. Those delicate, fine threads,
By which sensations send their messages
From th' outward world to the attentive spirit,
Should now be grown to callousness of fears,
And hell itself despoiled of half its terrors.
I am a tardy learner in the school
Of wickedness. The fiend should teach me quicker
Forgetfulness how fair is Virtue's face,—
Not set her purity and loveliness
Ever beside his own deformity,—
Or, by some demon magic, blacken her
Beyond the darkness of his scowling visage.
Where is the cunning hath been claimed for him,
That cannot gild one line of ugliness
To semblance of a beauty, though the show
Were but the thin illusion of an instant?
Still doth he point me to her lovely eyes,
And laugh exultant of my misery.
Am I, then, fated to a slavery
That needs no lure to catch my helpless soul?
Nor any angel hath a care of me?
If Heaven hath moved no hand in my defence,

I was abandoned ere the hour I fell,
And the great Prince of Evil hath small reason
To pride himself upon my quick defeat :
A host of fiends against a single soul.

LADY MACBETH.

Virtue is fair to those that think her so ;
A picture we may paint to any tint
That Fancy to Enthusiasm shows.
For me, I think if she lack majesty
She is as poor as common kitchen drudge,
Nor any beauty in her baby face ;
But bind her forehead with a golden crown,
And a new lustre lights her queenly eyes,
And throws its flush of beauty on her cheeks :
So Evil, crowned, hath like transcendent smile.
Banish, my lord, this thing of prettiness
That haunts your spirit with remorseful eyes,
And think upon the glory of your crown.

MACBETH.

Glory?—a mockery ! a curse ! a torment !—
O for one hour of that free brow I wore
When first upon the blasted heath I met
The fateful Sisters ! Often when this gold

Seems molten fire the memory comes back
Of the cool winds that swept across that moor.
Then I was loved of all, and every eye
Held pleasant welcome in its cheerful light,
No frowns nor threats. The crown of victory
Was on my brow, that bore its weight more proudly
Than ever it has worn the crown of Scotland.
All then was possible, for good men's prayers
Were breathed for me, and honorable hopes
Were mine, that hung their garlands on the future.
But later, when the prize was won, those garlands
Withered and faded at my fevered touch;
And wretched memories alone returned
With recollection of that wind-swept moor;
For on those winds, in chariots of cloud,
Came the weird tempters—Ha, I see them now!

[*The WEIRD SISTERS dimly appear.*]

LADY MACBETH.

They are not real. O sir, dismiss these fancies.
My eyes, as yours, have been baptized with crime;
But yet they see no supernatural shapes
Save when they look on you; and from your fears,
The whitening of your lips, dilated eyes,
And bristling hair, catch from your tortured soul
A glimpse of horrors. Waking, I will not fear:

If to my sleep come all the imps of hell,
When I awake they fly away with dreams.

MACBETH.

See you not these fantastic, threatening shapes,—
The messengers of fate?

LADY MACBETH.

I see no shapes
But of accustomed things.

THE WEIRD SISTERS.

Out of sin's diablery
We arise, the fateful three ;
Out of darkness, out of gloom
Come our spells foreboding doom ;
Yet we owe our blackest art
To the foulness of your heart.
Sisters we, and hand in hand
Grimly come at your command.
Naught of evil do we bring
But your heart hath coined the thing.
Shudder not at word or spell ;
In yourself its germ doth dwell.
Every omen strange and fell
That our lips appeared to tell,—

Cauldron, apparitions three,
 All our baffling prophecy ;
 Every horror we have shown ;
 Weirdness, wildness,—all's your own.
 In no land of dismal gloom,
 In no realm of bodeful doom
 Doth Evil make a darker den
 Than in wicked hearts of men.
 Sisters we, and hand in hand
 Grimly come at your command.

[MACBETH, LADY MACBETH, and the WEIRD SISTERS fade slowly away ;
 OPHELIA appears, and, while she is singing, POLONIUS.]

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.

*Crowned murderers, pass on through the wonderful gates
 Of our land of enchantment and sorcery,
 The fantastical country whose portal awaits
 The hands of the dream-sprites to turn the charmed key.*

*Go forth with your gloom, O ye tragical pair !
 Dissolve into darkness, poor, sorrowful ghosts !
 With the curse that ye bear, with the sins that ye wear,
 Go mingle again with the faded dream-hosts !*

*Now out of the dusk that still groweth lighter
 Dim figures are struggling to break into dreams,
 Until comes a fair vision, while Dreamland grows brighter,
 And gildeth the phantom with magical beams.*

OPHELIA (*singing*).

Alas, to bloom no more !
No sunshine can restore,
Nor summer hours,
Those that an icy breath
Hath touched with kiss of death,
My pretty flowers.

Pure snowdrops pale and cold,
And daffodils more bold,
And violets blue ;
Bright Mary-buds that hold
Each a round cup of gold
To catch the dew ;

Stars of the celandine,
Blue hyacinths more fine,
And goldilocks ;
Pale wind-flowers,—ah me,
Their name a prophecy !—
And lady's-smocks.

I loved to see them there,
The blossoms sweet and fair
Of glad spring-time ;
But April winds were chill,
And late frosts came to kill
Them in their prime.

When tenderly I pressed
In sadness to my breast
 Their withered bloom,
Their early blight, methought,
My sorrowing bosom caught,
 And fatal doom.

Ah me, to be a flower,
And perish in an hour
 Of cold, cold frost!
Gay tints bright sunshine sent,
Sweet odors Nature lent,
 All lost! all lost!

POLONIUS.

There is no tint of summer, no perfume
Born of a flower, but memory, my child,
Can bring it back; its spirit lingereth still
Somewhere; it is not lost.

OPHELIA.

[Holding up a withered flower.]

Poor blossom, what
To you but mockery is the gay sunshine
That kissed your petals once with golden bloom;
But now, alas! feeds your consuming blight?

POLONIUS.

Ah! child, your sadness hath diseased your brain ;
Thus must you reason—

[*Taking the flower from OPHELIA.*]

Here hath once been bloom ;
Hidden, I grant you, now ; yet proven, too,
By touch of blight. If you would bring again
The freshness and the fragrance, let your thoughts
Go back beyond the blight. Ere the frost came
This flower breathed only joy ; spake of the sun,
Green fields, soft winds, the painted drifts of cloud
That, sailing in blue seas, cast down on it
Sometimes a passing shadow ; of young Spring
Singing his carols. See you not, my child,
How, out of blight, you thus can reconstruct
The perfect bloom ? Forgetting present ills,
The wise look out through windows of remembrance
On landscapes bright with flowers. What though gloom
Hang all about us in a darkened room,
If through the lattice pleasant sunshine glows,
And summer's wealth of bloom possesses us,
Entering our hearts through our delighted eyes !
Oh, I can teach you, child,—if you'll be taught,—
Your old, gay smiles ; but first give up these songs
And withered flowers !

OPHELIA.

Alas, the frost, the blight !
I am, like these, the picture of a hope
Too early killed by an untimely frost !

POLONIUS.

Tut ! tut ! you are like a peevish baby, girl,
To stretch your fingers upward to the stars,
And cry because you cannot touch their shine.

[Enter HAMLET.]

HAMLET.

As in a dream ofttimes strange opposites
Meet and are mingled in fraternity ;
And good and bad, grotesque and beautiful
Are pushed in contact ; so the scheme of life
Gathers together harsh discordancies,
And bids us blend them into harmony.
My heart is formed to love ; and I must hate :
I would stretch forth a kindly hand to all ;
But in that hand Fate puts an unsheathed sword,
And bids me kill. If by decree of Heaven
I was ordained executor of laws
That punish, wherefore was my bosom filled
With womanish tenderness ? It should have been
So stern and flinty that I could have smiled

To see my victims bleed. If I must crush
The bloom of love with unrelenting will,
Why was it planted in my breast to die
Such cruel death?

OPHELIA (*approaching Hamlet*).

If love and tenderness
Grow in our hearts, why banish not their banes?
Why not pluck up the weeds of cruelty
That fairer flowers may bloom?

HAMLET.

So life were blest;
But Duty with her cold lips called to me,
And Conscience kept her pother at my heart
Till Kindness seemed a sin, and Cruelty
The heaven-directed master of my life.
I know not wherefore Kindness and sweet Love
Should yield themselves to Conscience and cold Duty:
The gentler pair are the more beautiful;
Why may their loveliness not come of Heaven?
Perhaps I should have turned an adder's ear
To supernatural visitings, nor set
My thought and hand to do a work divine.
What is a man that he should think to shape
The ways of destiny! That I have failed
May be the showing of the poet's art,

How vain is that presumption would assume
A power supreme, and seek with human hand
To draw Heaven's justice on the criminal.

OPHELIA.

The love of virtue and a hate of crime
Have been the noble passions of your soul
To hush the voice of Kindness.

HAMLET.

So I dreamed

In the vain arrogance of a conceit
That set my wit in judgment over men ;—
But I have marred your young and innocent life,
Striving to wield a god's dread thunderbolt
With mortal strength.

OPHELIA.

My lord, my life was yours ;
And it was marred by your unhappiness
Ere fell the fatal stroke. Think it a part
Of the so cruel fortune that hath fallen
On you, nor grieve for me. It is as if
Your hand unskilful had bestowed a hurt
Upon yourself.

HAMLET.

Still doth it baffle thought,
That love of virtue can induce to crime,
And sense of duty be a fatal snare.

OPHELIA.

No crime can come of good intent, whatever
Misfortune may befall.

HAMLET.

That were to save
Our virtue by our folly. Can it be
That all the grand imaginings that thronged
My busy brain made me a fitter type
Of man's unfitness for redressing wrong?
And every glimpse through life's strange mystery
Was but a dazzle, in whose blinding glare
I went as far astray as he who hath
No light? This way and that, as conscience cries,
As inclination draws, as duty points,
As reason tells, or fancy wildly flies,
Goes human action. One day I am a god
Climbing on seats of judgment to direct
How Nature and her laws may better move;
The next, the wheel of some calamity
Rolls over me, and pride of judgment sinks

As lowly as the earth whereon I lie
 Joining complainings with some brother worm
 Crushed by a careless foot.

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.

*Now we darken again for the dreamer
 The realm where he wanders afar,
 And we whirl through the brain of the sleeper
 The wheels of a magical car :*

*Then we call from the host of our shadows
 A phantom that weareth a crown ;
 And we stamp on the brow of our dream-king
 The pain and the murk of a frown ;*

*That the puppet may publish a lesson
 As broad as the infinite plan :
 That the glory of kingship is nothing,
 But Love is the crowning of man.*

[*The figures of HAMLET, OPHELIA, and POLONIUS become indistinct ; and their mingling lines at length grow into the shape of KING RICHARD III.*]

KING RICHARD III.

I am the type of evil : no soft touch
 Of pity, sympathy with man or woman,
 Generosity, or love, hath moved my heart.
 If I could love, 'twould be myself ; none other :

Yet find I not that height of admiration
Of aught I am, to be a cause of love.
What though no creature love me? what good thing
Would come of it? If some fond, foolish one,
A friend, a woman lavish of a heart,—
As 'tis a woman's nature,—in a mood
Of loving, a caprice, should give to me
This tenderness, a heart crammed full of love,
Of sentiment and sighs, how could it be
Aught but a mockery while I love none?
It may be that affection breeds delight;
But this is naught to me. The deaf man hears
No music; for, to him, it is as if
Sweet concord were not; and that quality
That toucheth other hearts with each accord
Of melody, to him is ever dumb;
Nor hath he key to the strange mystery
Of passion, folly, tears, or merriment
By which he sees humanity disturbed
When some skilled minstrel sweeps a viol's strings.
So to my spirit comes no tender voice
To charm me into rhapsodies of love.
I am the poet's picture of a heart
That hath no quality of this weak folly.
For grander joys my bolder steps have climbed
Above my fellows. Thy sweet pangs, Ambition,
Have thrilled my breast; I know the charms of power,
The proud elation of the swelling hearts

Of kings. If conscience hath tormented me,
It is the common penalty of joy,
That ever springs from memory of a pain.
I hear men prate of happiness: if this
Be aught but pleasure of delighted senses,
Dull joys of lazy indolence and ease,
Or satisfaction of the hungry passions,
I know it not. True, I have seen in eyes
Of foolish dreamers a marvellous light,
Kindled, methought, by fevered craze of wits,
That glowed to fervor while, poor fools! they hugged
Some useless thing to their fast-throbbing hearts,
And dreamed they were more fortunate than kings.
Ah! can it be that this impassioned dream,
This flood of deep, unreasoning tenderness
That drowneth self beneath its fervent waves,
Is truest pulse of life? my high career,
Trampling on love and hearts, a pageantry
And masque of life, whose purpose is to show
That love alone is happiness; all else—
Ambition, pride, each passion of the heart,
Sceptre, and crown—but gilding of the gates
That open to the realms of misery?
Then, like stuffed monster in a painted cage,
Am I hung up to be the mock of time,
A picture of the powers of intellect
Untempered by the softening touch of love.
Can this be so? and Nature's frantic howling,—

Loves or sharp heart-pangs of the forest brutes,
A panther's wail above her slaughtered cubs,—
Safer direction through life's mysteries,
Tones nearer to celestial harmonies,
Than Plato found, or Aristotle taught
In the broad reach of his philosophy?

[*The GHOSTS OF KING RICHARD'S VICTIMS are heard singing.*]

GHOSTS.

From realms of far Ghostland our shadows have fled,
An army of phantoms, a host of the dead:
We come not with wailing nor sad-sounding dole,
To vex with our moaning a sin-troubled soul.

We come not with horrors o'er slumber to creep,
Nor with curses to torture the hours of his sleep,
Foretelling a doom that in darkness shall close
On his soul, as the sea on a spent swimmer flows:

But in pity we come, and with tears we would fain
Wash out of his bosom its terrible stain;
For across the vast deeps where our spirits have flown
We bear not the hatreds that here we have known.

When we came to his sleep in the day of his doom
Our voices were thickened by death's awful gloom ;
But now they are clear from the pure, upper skies
Where the passions of mortals can never arise :

And the chill and the terror are gone from us now,
That of old brought the big, icy drops to his brow ;
And our numbers are changed to a soul-stirring chant
Bringing hope to the sin-burdened heart that we haunt :

For we sing of a love that is older than time,
That kindleth all life by a purpose divine,
That draweth all hearts to one ultimate goal,
The beauty of heaven, the home of the soul.

When cold Reason falters before the dark gates
Where the grim porter, Death, like a sentinel waits,
No glimmer is seen through the dark clouds above
Save the far and faint rays of the pure star of love—

To mortals a star ; yet its joy-bringing beams
Oft kindle glad bosoms to rapture that seems
To be born of a brightness in which they can see
The infinite sun of a glory to be.

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.

*O shadow of ill, though the song of the phantoms
 Be melting to softness your crime-hardened breast,
 You must fly far away through the deserts of Dreamland ;
 You must fade in the darkness, and pass like the rest.*

*You must yield up your place to the shade of a monarch
 Who weareth no crown, and who cometh in tears ;
 But whose majesty, even through flashes of madness
 And wreck of lost reason, still kingly appears.*

*Ah ! who is so wise that can read the strange riddle,
 Why Reason the monarch descends from his throne,
 And his train of lost thoughts all bewildered must wander
 As if they were seeking the soul that hath flown ?*

[KING RICHARD'S shape changes slowly into that of KING LEAR, which then for a few moments becomes quite bright ; CORDELIA and KENT appear ; but the group afterward becomes dim ; and during the woman's song fades away.]

KING LEAR.

What is this constant whispering in my ear,
 This voice without a tongue ?—Its tale is idle :
 How can I hold that true which hath no place
 Or substance that the eye can fix upon ?
 Blank as the air is space ; yet still it whispers,

“Your life of fierce and passionate dominion
Was prelude unto madness. What could come
When fierce excess of passion burned to fever,
But fever’s frenzy? Blame not then, poor madman,
Ingratitude of daughters. So the world
Hath ever moved: forgetting what is past
In present having. You learned not with years
Its lesson; now it puts you on the stool
Of dunces; and you cry in peevishness
Against its harshness. Foolish Vanity
And weak Presumption were the wicked daughters
That stripped you of your robes of sovereignty,
And turned you, houseless, to the pelting storm,
A prating madman.”

CORDELIA.

Nay, I pray you, sir,
Put these disturbing cries and painful fancies
Out of your thoughts: believe the cruel Past
Was but a dream from which you have awaked
To present comfort.

KING LEAR.

Ah, if they were dreams,
Regan and Goneril! No, no; I fear
This comfort is the dream: it cannot be—
You are not real; reality is madness,
Ingratitude, the fierce and biting storm—

Where is the crazy one the foul fiend vexed?
He had not been a king: why was he mad?

KENT.

Remembrance, like a storm, comes over him
With all the dash and clatter of mad thoughts ;
Yet through the tumult still its wild winds sing
One horrible refrain, ingratitude ;
At which his soul takes fire, and swiftly sweeps
Along the gamut of emotion, as at sea
The storm-strained cordage of a tossed ship sings
Deep mutterings of awful melody,
Strains plaintive, wild, or rising to a shriek,
Its dirge of doom. Dear lady, much I fear
The sunshine of your love hath come too late
Where storm and wrack have driven into darkness
Of an unending night the poor king's soul.

CORDELIA.

O cruel fortune, I must be away
So far from this dear father when, perchance,
One little word of true love, whispered him
By filial lips, had saved his mind from wreck !
He always yearned for love ; but, in the wealth
He deemed was garnered in my sisters' breasts,
Thought my poor little, which I could not praise
As they did theirs with lavish tongues, superfluous :

And when he found but empty storehouses
There where he thought him rich,—poor bankrupt father!—
The love I had so little art to tell
Seemed doubtless to him like the counterfeits
He had believed; and so his heart was broken
Because he had no child.

KENT.

Weep not, kind lady,
Your love is now the single star that shines
For him out of the night; your filial duty
The only anchor that can save his wreck,
And hold him from the black, relentless storm
Of wild distractions howling dismally
Over the wastes of deep and dread despair.

KING LEAR.

[*Beckoning to KENT.*]

Dost see my daughter, her I banished from me?
I think it must be a delusive shape
Like many that surround me; for I know
That I am mad;—but see: she smiles and weeps
While all the rest have fierce and angry brows.

KENT.

'Tis your Cordelia; not a phantom, king;
Your own true daughter that hath ever loved you.

CORDELIA.

Father, believe my heart hath never failed
Of loving duty. If my meagre words
Displeased you once, now let me speak with deeds
Of watchful love. If all the world forsake,
Here is your faithful Kent to join with me
In all kind offices.

KING LEAR.

Cordelia—Kent—

I do remember me—Ah, see : my daughters
Point and make faces, laugh and mock at me.
Unkind, unkind ! I thought that they were true,
And they are false. They turned me from their doors
Into the storm : and so it made me mad.
Listen : I think they plot against my life ;
I am not safe. I'll e'en go back again
To the rude storm. There is more pity there,—
Pity and love in the rough-blowing winds,—
Than in my daughters. Ho ! who waits me there ?
Bid forth my knights : the king will go in state.

KENT.

I pray you, madam, bid your women sing :
He is most soothed by music.

SINGER.

Wearily
Through all the day,
Aimless, here and there-away
Wandered I,—how drearily!—
Heart-oppressed.

And the sun
His course had run ;
Yet the brooding, boding ill
Lingered in my bosom still,
Gloomy guest.

On, still on,
My footsteps won
To a spot that seemed to me
Of all the noisy world to be
Quietest :

Where, before
Her cottage door,
In the hush of evening mild,
A mother holds her sleeping child
To her breast.

While she sings
Bright angels' wings
Softly hover in the air,
Shedding peace and blessing there,
And sweet rest.

Gently sigh
Faint breezes by,
And the gold and purple light
Hangs a painted curtain bright
In the west.

Full of bloom
And sweet perfume
Trailing woodbine climbs above,
Where the cooing cushat-dove
Builds her nest—

Cooing dove
And songs of love
Join in mingling melody,
Till their music seems to be
In my breast.

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.

*Now out of the portals of Dreamland there cometh
A shadow of passion and tragical woe ;
And the dim shades around him shrink back from the phan-
tom,
As on his wild figure the dream-light we throw.*

*He wraps in his arms the white robes of a lady,
That serve by their whiteness and contrast to show
The dusk of his face and the gloom of each feature,
While fixed on her pale face his lurid eyes glow.*

*But naught in the beautiful face of the lady
Responds to the passion and fire of his eyes,
For the dread hand of Death hath stricken its beauty,
And as chill, but as fair as a lily she lies.*

[OTHELLO *appears, carrying the dead body of DESDEMONA.*]

OTHELLO.

Dead and so beautiful ! Thy purity
Is like the light of a white star that shines
Out of its heaven upon this wicked world,
An angel's gaze through pitying veil of tears !
How is my bosom haunted by a demon
That made me slay my angel ! With a mist
Clouding my brain, the monster Jealousy

Hath quenched my brightest day in heavy fogs.
Oh, I have been more blessed than my deserving,
More cursed than all the measure of my sins!
Was Heaven so envious of my happiness,
So careless of the welfare of a soul,
To send no angel from its watch-towers down
Against the ancient enemy of men,
Who from the deeps of lowest Tartarus,—
The foulest demon of the foulest caves
Of Tartarus,—came to my happy Eden
To poison all the fountains of my joy?
Hath then a demon power to smite an angel?
Nay, she hath flown to realms angelical;
'Tis I am smitten by this cruel passion,
This imp of Demogorgon, that appeared
Hideous in feature as his demon master
The while he poured his venom in my heart,
And turned my love to madness. Ah, pale one,
It was not I that slew thee. Pitiful
I wept while Jealousy, more strong than I,
Usurped dominion of my heart and brain,
And, with a tiger's fierceness, bade me kill.
See, I weep yet: canst thou not feel my tears,
In big, round drops, fall on thy pallid face?
Dead—dead; but not by me! Were I the monster
That killed thee, now I should rejoice, not weep.

[*The figures of OTHELLO and DESDEMONA fade slowly away as the others have done; and are succeeded for a short time by a chaos of indistinct forms.*]

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.

*Again, like a sun-lighted fog that hath drifted
O'er a high mountain valley, and changeth the view,
The clouds of our mystery float o'er the sleeper
To hide from him one dream, revealing a new.*

*No longer Othello's wild passion appeareth,
Nor of fair Desdemona the pale beauty gleams ;
But a crowd of vague phantoms, uncertain and broken,
Seem striving to burst from the portal of dreams.*

*But we hold in our hands the keys of the dream-gates,
And the phantoms must yield to our absolute sway :
Lo ! we charm back the throng that would break from the
barriers,
While the two we have chosen our summons obey.*

[CLEOPATRA and ANTONY appear.]

CLEOPATRA.

Speak not, O Antony, of Cæsar's triumph :
It is not conquered provinces, nor crowns,
The rule of realms as broad as Nilus floods,
Nor wealth enough to build a pyramid
That makes life's royalty.

ANTONY.

Then were you not,
O Egypt, made more royal by the gifts
My conquering sword hath won? Blazed not your fame
More widely on the world that vanquished kings
Toiled at the oars, your bargemen? that Arabia
Sent you, o'er sandy wastes, her patient camels
'Laden with spices? that for you swart slaves
Came, long foot-weary, from the distant mines
Of Libya, freighted with sun-bright diamonds?
That Cappadocia sent you fairest silks?
Pontus, by swiftest messengers, her fruits?
And Persia, pearls to glisten on your bosom?

CLEOPATRA.

Nay, Antony: the royalty I prized
Was the dominion of your heart; your gifts
Were part of you.

ANTONY.

But this dominion, queen,
Sprung from the wiles of your sweet sorcery,
Not from your royalty.

CLEOPATRA.

What regal power
May match with hers that can enslave the heart
Of a world's conqueror, herself enslaved
By bonds so fond they make his greatness hers?

ANTONY.

Sorceress, whence have you this Circe's power?
Hath it come down the line of Ptolemies
From some star-gazing ancestor who drew
Strange magic from the heavens to be the dower
Of you, his far-off daughter? Or, perchance,
Your tributary river, flowing down
From undiscovered lands beyond the ken
Of farthest voyager, brought you magic spells,
Wrought by the hands of weird earth-sprites that dwell
Deep in the bosom of the hills, to bind
In adamantine chains the hearts of men.

CLEOPATRA.

There is a magic in the human heart
More potent than the spells of wizard might:
The heart that's royal can command its slaves,
And they will lift it out of lowliness
To top of fortune. What to me the sceptre
And rule of Egypt? I had Antony
To bring me kingdoms, and to be my glory.

ANTONY.

To bring you kingdoms, and to lose you all
To Cæsar !

CLEOPATRA.

Nay, not so. Life was my toy ;
And when it pleased me not, I threw it down.
What Cæsar won was a discarded garment
That I had worn, but which no longer pleased me.
It was my wont to give to some loved slave
My robe of yesterday ; so let the Roman
Put on my Egypt, which was soiled for me ;
I had its newness, more of pleasure in it
When at our feasts I wore it, Antony,
Than it can ever bring of joys to Cæsar.

ANTONY.

Such loftiness of heart converts defeat
To victory, when it can throw down life
Before the threatening frowns of adverse fate
Without regrets.

CLEOPATRA.

Believe me, Antony,
I never felt more royal, more a queen,
Than when I placed the aspic in my bosom,
And wooed the King of Terrors to my arms,
And laughed at Cæsar.

ANTONY.

So have you a charm
 To make even dull Philosophy your slave,
 And wear his robe of plain, plebeian serge,
 That seems a poorer garb to poorer souls,
 With queenly grace. Lend me the charm, fair queen,
 That I may cry with you, Defeat to Cæsar!
 So will the glory of my wars remain,
 And all my victories, when at the last,
 A conqueror of fate, I bade Death open
 His frowning portals, that my car of triumph
 Might bear you, queen, beyond the power Rome lends him
 Of war-trained legions to make victories.
 It is a barren Egypt he hath won:
 The grain was ours, he comes to gather up
 A gleaner's share, the poor and empty husks.

[*The scene now becomes dim, and the forms of CLEOPATRA and ANTONY fade until they become indistinct; then their lines grow slowly into the figures of MERCUTIO and BENVOLIO.*]

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.

*O wonderful figures of passion and power,
 Whose grand shapes are enshrined in the temple of Fame,
 How you dwarf into littleness all modern lovers,
 Though the fashion of loving, perchance, be the same!*

*The greatness of Rome and the pageant of Egypt
You bear on your broad brows of beauty and pride,
But, alas, there are deep sunken marks sin hath written
The lines of your grandeur and beauty beside !*

*You have served for our showing, depart at our bidding,
And yield to the mystical spells that we weave.
Lo, we paint the thin air with our magical pencils,
And fashion anew the faint shadows you leave !*

[*The figures of MERCUTIO and BENVOLIO brighten.*]

BENVOLIO.

Tell me, I pray you, good Mercutio,
What is it makes the difference in men ?
Why should our Romeo be a lover ? you,
A laughers ? I—

MERCUTIO.

A thing made up of humors :
Now breathing deeper sighs than Romeo's ;
Anon more quarrelsome than even Tybalt ;
And the next hour your visage lengthening out
Till you must seek a holy father's cell
To prate about your soul.

BENVOLIO.

I do protest
I am not such ; but wherefore question I
Upon so grave a subject him who turns
Every occasion into mirth and laughter ?

MERCUTIO.

O, here is one hath yet to learn that folly
Is oft the visor Wisdom hides behind,
The painted smile, the broad and smirk grimace
That sits on brows to cover wrinkled care !
A laugher I ? I am, and I am not.
Lo, now, I pull my visor soberly ;
And, like a most grave doctor, answer you.
The world is made of several kinds of men
For the same reason that the face of earth
Is not one dreary level, nor the sea
Eternal calm. Say we were lovers all :
There were so many sighs, our windy world,
Puffed here and there, out of its course would swerve
Like ship unballasted ; and the scared Moon—
The modest Moon—would hide behind a cloud,
As a sweet maid of sixty hides her beauty
Behind a fan when gallants talk of love.
Say we were quarrellers so hot to fight
As you are—in the humor : woe the world !

None would be left but only maids and widows
To sing like swans the requiem of the race.
Or if we all put on one melancholy,
The sight would be so wondrous pitiful,—
In every face the other's parody,—
That even Sorrow, gazing through her tears,
Would catch infection of the grim burlesque,
And twist her face to such contorted smile
That in one peal of laughter all would join;
And melancholy be dissolved away
In the grotesque. The world is made of humors
That it may be a world. Some men are grave,
And walk with downcast eyes and solemn steps,
Like very owls of wisdom. Some there are
That chatter thoughtless as a nest of pies.
One hath, perhaps, a touch of bodily ill,
A queasy stomach, and he thinks the fault
Is in his star; or it may be he hath
A torpid liver, and he swears his love
Is faithless, hugs the demon Jealousy
Fast to his breast, and raves 'gainst cruel Fate.
Which is the wise man? Pick him out, Benvolio,
That I may go to school again.

BENVOLIO.

Not I:

Yet here, Mercutio, is not the salve

For Romeo's hurt—but look: the sick man comes;
And, with him, his infection.

MERCUTIO.

Ah! so sweet
Looked beauteous Dian when that goddess bright
Sprang from her chariot of silver clouds
Where slept Endymion on the Latmian hills,
And sought to wake her lover with a kiss.
There is a pretty lover's posy for you—
But come, Benvolio, lest we share the fate
Of him who peeped at chaste Diana's bath.

[MERCUTIO and BENVOLIO retire, and ROMEO and JULIET appear.]

JULIET.

Alas, that I should bring so fatal dower!—
I who have wished for all the Indies' wealth
That I might say, "Lo, this I bring to you!"
Or that I were a queen, to give my throne
To you, my king; but I have brought you death,
A gloomy, dark, and most unlovely thing.

ROMEO.

Richer than treasures of the richest Ind
Or all the fabled wealth of far Cathay

You came to me. Not even Prester John,
With seventy vassal-kings before his knees,
Hath empire half so goodly as the heart
Of which, sweet Juliet, you have made me lord.

JULIET.

I would its empire had enclosed you round
So tenderly with its protecting hosts
That death might from the threshold of your kingdom
Be beaten back, and find his wingèd hours
Of no avail against our wingèd loves!

ROMEO.

Against Love's kingdom let us not account
King Death an enemy: he were our foe
If he had taken one; but happily
Transporting both into this land of shadows
He makes our loves immortal. Ours a tale
That lovers oft shall whisper in fond ears;
And many a sympathetic sigh be breathed
From amorous hearts that throb as ours have throbbed;
For still, as time runs on, will circumstance
Pile up its mountains in the path of lovers;
But yet, as in our story, fail to keep
Two hearts asunder that are joined by love.

JULIET.

Death hath no terrors that could stay my feet
At threshold of his kingdom while he held
You as his subject. Though his shadowy realm
Were ten times darker; though more bitter tears
Than e'er on earth were shed fell constantly
Across its stormy border; yet it were
My chosen land if you were dwelling there.

ROMEO.

Brave Love to flash with rainbow-tinted wings
Against Death's Gorgon shield and fatal spear,
And bid defiance to the conqueror;
Daring his wrath who never struck in vain!

JULIET.

So Sappho sang when from Lucadian cliffs
She sprung, and called on grim-eyed Death to bear
Her, with the sweep of his far-stretching wings,
Through the gray mist of ocean and its waves,
Past the sharp, jutting points of perilous rocks,
Beyond the scream of sea-birds and the din
Of stormy winds that vexed that sea-beat coast,
Where he, her mariner, in a far isle
Caressed by murmuring waves and kindly skies,

Watched for her coming with untiring eyes,
And listened with love's tender eagerness
To catch the first, sweet music of her song
Floating melodiously o'er dancing waves.

ROMEO.

So sighed Leander when his drowning eyes
Beheld, though pale through driving spray,
Sweet Hero's lamp that glimmered o'er the sea
From Lesbian watch-tower; and his heart forgot
All present peril in delicious thoughts
Of her who waited on the moonlit strand.

JULIET.

So wailed Polyxena upon the tomb
Of her Greek lover.

ROMEO.

So upon his harp
Orpheus divinely struck, what time he trod
The dreadful pathway of the nether world,
And ghosts in Hades hushed their shrieks to hear
His tuneful call to lost Eurydice,
While all that dismal country silent grew,
Listening to strains of death-defying love.

[ROMEO and JULIET *disappear.*]

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.

*Though Love be the master of life, and he ruleth
His kingdom divinely ; he ruleth not here :
E'en Love is a vassal in realm of our Dreamland,
To come at our call ; at our word, disappear.*

*So the lovers have vanished in midst of their rhapsody,
Faded and past with the visions that sweep
Through the brain of the dreamer ; yet often their figures
Shall come at our call through the chambers of sleep.*

*And Pity, the white-robed, now openeth the portal,
And calleth her phantoms to pass into dreams—
Though Love be a laugh, and tearful is Pity,
Yet scarcely less comely her pale beauty seems.*

[SHYLOCK appears.]

SHYLOCK.

Cursed ! always cursed ! The burning wrath of God,
That fell of old time on my hapless race,
Still lingers—here, I feel it scorching here—
Here in my hot brain—here, within my breast,
Tearing the strings and fibres of my heart !
I am a Jew ! Because I loved my wealth,—
The sole ambition that the tyrant world

Hath left my race,—I am abused and scorned.
Because I loved my daughter,—the sole thing
That cruel fate had left to cheer my heart,—
They laugh at me : the jeering Christians mock
Th' unhappy Jew. Their laws—Venetian laws !—
Fool that I was to think that laws were made
For Jews ! No ; I must learn again,—ay, learn
By wounds that greedy teeth of tyranny
Have torn,—that laws are not for me, a Jew.
Doth my own conscience join with my tormentors
To cry, “ Thy sorrows come but of thy sins ” ?
It is a lie ! I never injured her ;
Gave her soft life and golden ornaments,
And set her in the citadel of my heart
Which she most traitorously hath yielded up
Unto my foes. For that they take my wealth,
Though they have broken sacred laws to do it,
I see some glimpse of justice. Thou hast none,
Unfaithful daughter, most ungrateful child,
Repeating on thy parent that old sin
Of Judas who betrayed and sold his master.
Helpless !—ah, that it is that cuts the deepest !
However I may rail, the Christians' laugh
Sounds, like the mock of demons, in my ears ;
And all the venom of my wrath must pour
Its poison only on my miserable self.
Yea, so abased my race, it hath no part
Of the heroic spirit that pulled down

On the Philistines their proud temple walls ;
And I must cringe and fawn where I would smite
And kill, if I had Samson's lordly heart.

[PORTIA and BASSANIO appear.]

BASSANIO.

Mark where the Jew upbraids his Hebrew gods.

PORTIA.

Although he sought our noble merchant's life,
Yet must I pity his unhappiness.

BASSANIO.

Pity a Jew? O gentle advocate,
I pray you, do not waste your heart's pure wealth
Of sympathy upon a thing so cursed
Of Heaven and men as this ungentle Jew.

PORTIA.

Think you, my lord, he hath not in his heart
A cry that calls for human sympathy?

BASSANIO.

Nay: he is but a type of Greed and Hate ;
In him the twain are wedded ; and his crimes
Are the fit progeny of such a pair.

PORTIA.

That which is base should ever have our hate ;
But yet there is a human part in him
That suffers ; and his agony, his tears,
The heavy sighs, that o'er his bosom break
Like surging billows on a storm-tossed sea,
Wound him more deeply, make his pains more sore
Than when affliction smites a virtuous breast.
So should his woes call for our sympathy ;
For who is there that hath so hard a heart,
However proud, but in it there abides
Some sweet compassion for man's suffering ?
Or who may dare to say this wretched Jew
Hath with his own humanity no tie
Of brotherhood ? O, dear my lord, I would
That we might give some comfort to the Jew.

BASSANIO.

I know not if my love or admiration
Pay you the larger tribute. Go, I pray,
Angel of pity to all suffering hearts,
And heal the Jew's wounds with your tears' soft balm.

PORTIA.

Shylock !—he doth not heed me—Shylock !

[Laying her hand on his arm.]

Shylock !

SHYLOCK.

What will you have? my life? I have no gold;
That you have robbed me of: I have but life.

PORTIA.

Part of your burden.

SHYLOCK.

You? O mock me not;
Nor make my misery your merriment.

PORTIA.

I am not merry. Shylock, if my voice
Rebuked your sin, see, here are pitying tears
That weep your punishment.

SHYLOCK.

Why weep for me?
I am a Jew.

PORTIA.

No bounds doth Pity set
About her kingdom: broad as is the realm
Of all humanity, she holds her reign.
She bends her head above the wretched leper,
And drops her tears upon his burning scales,
Till in the softness of her tender eyes
He half-forgets the fever of his blood,
His fierce despair, and utter misery.

She flies with white wings over battle-fields,
And pours her balm on hearts that waste and faint
In the grim agonies of lingering death.
She takes the toil-worn hand of the poor slave,
And whispers sympathy to his lone heart.
She casts her soft arms round the miserable ones,
The cripple, maimed, and blind ; and by her charms
Of tenderness their miseries are forgot.
Pity descended like a dove from heaven
To dwell in human hearts what time mankind
Emerged from savagery, and the wild tribes
Of our fierce ancestors grew tame, and Peace
First came to bless the earth. Yet Cruelty
Still lingered in men's bosoms, and the dove
Hath oft been frightened from her nestling-place
While War, oppression, and hot wrath prevailed.
Yet doth she ever come again to claim
Her habitation. Though the world seems harsh,
Think not that Cruelty alone reigns here.
In every heart the voice of Pity pleads ;
And often fiery eyes of Cruelty
Grow dovelike, and the arm upraised to strike
Relents its purpose to a kind embrace.

SHYLOCK.

Your Pity is a Christian.—Ah, if so,
She cannot waste her kindness on a Jew.

PORTIA.

Nor Jew, nor Christian : Pity hath no creed ;
She is but human.

SHYLOCK.

Nay, she hates the Jew.

PORTIA.

[*Taking his hand.*]

Think that my tears are falling for you now
As tenderly as Jessica's shall flow
When passion's wayward fit hath passed away,
And she is kneeling to you for forgiveness,
Claiming once more her father's loving heart.

SHYLOCK.

Oh, never, never !

PORTIA.

Pity is akin
To Hope ; and hand in hand the sisters walk,
Singing sweet songs to ears of weariness,
And bringing comfort into wounded hearts.

[PORTIA, SHYLOCK, and BASSANIO *fade slowly away* ; and, through the cloudy obscurity that follows, a myriad flitting forms are seen ; but none so distinctly as to be recognizable until the figure of PUCK comes out of the chaos.]

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.

*Now thronging with bright and fantastical figures
The kingdom of Faery impatiently waits
To visit the dreamer with visions of Elfland,
And pour its gay court through our mystical gates.*

*Behold where King Oberon marshals his goblins ;
And the court of his queen is coming as well.
Lo, the gayest of sprites, the mad fairy of mischief,
Is sent, avant-courier, their coming to tell.*

*And well may they visit the sleep of the Master
Whose art hath so pictured their wonderful land ;
Ah, well may they bring him a tribute of honor,
And brighten his dreams with their magical band !*

PUCK.

I am the merriest elf of the train
Of Oberon, king of the fairy domain ;
Him do I serve, and Titania too,
The fairest of queens that e'er Fairyland knew.

I love with gay goblins to dance in a ring,
To leap with mad gambols, and merrily sing ;
Or over bright meadows to chase in full glee,
For his burden of honey, the swift-flying bee.

But better than all the wild joys of the chase,
King Oberon's splendor, his queen's lovely grace ;
Far better than every gay pleasure I know,
I love upon errands of mischief to go.

Intent upon laughter I cunningly steal
In the cottage where, busily twirling her wheel,
The house-wife is spinning ; and artfully pull
Her thread from the distaff, or tangle the wool.

Then laugh I to see her bewildered surprise
When, guessing my mischief, she angrily cries,
"O, this is the work of that troublesome sprite !
That mad Robin Goodfellow's been here to-night !"

When the milkmaid is carefully filling her pail
I spitefully pull at the patient cow's tail,
Till, vexed beyond bearing with tricks that I do,
She kicks over pail and the milkmaiden too.

When the farmer is soberly ploughing his ground
I shout to his horses with mimicking sound ;
They pull to one side ; and the ploughman is thrown
Far over the stilts when his plough strikes a stone.

No demon is full of such mad pranks as I ;
From mischief to mischief I busily fly :

And the merriest music that comes to my ear
Is when my vexed victims' loud scoldings I hear.

[*Enter a FAIRY.*]

FAIRY.

Ho, nimble Puck! Come hither, wicked sprite;
Bribe me with something that I may not tell
My mistress that I spied your late employ.
Yes, you must show me that bright-flashing stone
You told me of, the blazing carbuncle
That, like the red eye of a giant Cyclops,
Lights up deep caverns with its lurid light.

PUCK.

What can you tell?

FAIRY.

Of the Athenian maid
You charmed to follow at your dancing heels
Into the arms of amorous Oberon.

PUCK.

What saw you else?

FAIRY.

Much more I might have seen,
But a wood-demon chased me through the thickets.

PUCK.

What can you tell your mistress then of me?

FAIRY.

I shall but whisper to our jealous queen
Of that fair maid love-led through the thick woods.
She knows your master Oberon too well
To doubt your mission to the Athenian maid.

PUCK.

O stupid fairy! 'twas my hour of mischief:
I led the girl to lose her in the wood.

FAIRY.

O, I shall tell Titania! Guard you well
If you abuse her ear with a forged tale
Of private mischief; she will shut you fast,—
As once before,—in dungeon of a shell;
And for your jailor, fiercest of the spiders,
Him of the fiery eyes, the hungry wolf
That dwells hard by the spring; you know him well;
For once he almost made his meal of you—
Think of his cruel eyes and frightful claws;
And lead me to the wonderful cavern
That flashes with the fire-stone's magic light.

PUCK.

Malicious thing!

FAIRY.

Show me the carbuncle.

PUCK.

Follow me then ; and you shall see the wonder.

[*Aside.*]

Now will I shut her in a cave I know ;
And roll a heavy stone against its mouth,
Whilst I return to tell King Oberon
How they would use his messenger—
Ho ! here they are.

[*Enter OBERON, TITANIA, and their court. The fairy whispers to QUEEN
TITANIA.*]

OBERON (*to Puck*).

Imp of much mischief, what's your last misdeed?

PUCK.

I claim, King Oberon, my privilege
Of mischief-making : fairies of your court
Would rob me of it ; and they are supported
By majesty, while I am held by threats.

OBERON.

What mean you, sprite? There is no majesty
Can hold your fairy essence in its grasp,
But mine and Queen Titania's.

PUCK.

'Tis her fay
Who takes my office—but it is too late:
I see the storm on Queen Titania's brow;
The mischief is begun.

TITANIA.

We trust she sends
Kind words to you by your swift messenger.

OBERON.

Who sends?

TITANIA.

Your Athenian, king.

OBERON.

O jealous queen
Say what Athenian: who, I pray, is she?

TITANIA.

Your latest love, false king. O Perfidy,
How art thou crowned! Alas for Fairydom
When its imperial sceptre and its crown
Must grace a faithless king! Is she so fair
That by her side the queen of fairies seems
A sunburnt thing? 'Tis not a naiad now;
Her day is past: nor leaf-crowned dryad shy;
You tire of her: and must seek out a love
Among coarse mortals; stain your elfin essence
With earthiness. O shame of Fairydom!
We will usurp your sceptre, and arraign
Your recreancy although you be our king.
There is a statute in our elfin law:
If any fay shall woo a mortal maid
He must be banished out of Fairyland.
You have offended, king. Go back to her—
Go back to her mortality: watch on her cheek
Amid its flowery bloom how Time, your rival,
With toying fingers mars both bloom and beauty;
Behold her lustrous eyes grow dim, her grace
Sink into lines of harsh decrepitude;
Then think of her you slighted—her whose grace
As much excels your mortal's fairest hour
As doth yon star a glow-worm—think of her,
The queen of Faery; and repent too late.

OBERON.

Art mad, Titania? By my jewelled crown
I know not what you mean!

TITANIA (*to Puck*).

And you, bad sprite,
Beware my vengeance!

[PUCK *hides behind* KING OBERON'S *shield*.]

Ay, 'tis well, false elf,
To hide yourself behind your master's shield!
The hour will come my fays shall seize on you;
Then shall your old arch-enemy, the spider,
Feed full his ancient grudge.

PUCK.

[*Coming forward, and casting himself down before* QUEEN TITANIA.]

Your mercy, queen!

OBERON.

Nay, Puck, stand up.

[PUCK *rises, but still retains a look of mock humility*.]

What! am I king of Faery,
To be berated thus? And my true servant
Threatened before my face? O jealous queen,
What fancy hath possessed you that this storm

Makes such wild music in your troubled breast?
Hath all the grace of Fairydom no charm
To still your mad distrust? I have no love,
But only you—Or do you raise this tempest
Because the placid calm of my true faith
Grows wearisome?

TITANIA.

False king, th' Athenian girl
Whom Puck your servant charmed with magic philter
To make her love you—is she not full cause
Of cruel tempest to your injured queen?

OBERON.

If Love be blind, what can be said of Jealousy?
Thrice blind, and thrice again!—My love was pity;
And my obedient servant put a spell
On this Athenian lady and her lover
To bring mischances to a happy end.

[*Holding up a magic mirror.*]

Look, jealous queen; you know the quality
Of this true charm. Behold the lady there,
And, with her, him for whom my magic wrought.
What say you now?

TITANIA.

My eyes were blinded, king,
By too much love. Better it is to be
A little jealous than to love but little.

OBERON.

Fair queen, we do forgive you ; for besides
That a great love provoked this jealousy,
We thank your jealousy for one thing else :
Sweet queen of Faery, in your angry moods
Your beauty hath such phase as hath the panther's
When passion kindles grace to higher beauty,
And loveliness grows into majesty,
Nor loses in the change one charm of grace.

PUCK.

Bright queen, am I forgiven ? or must the spider
Feed his old grudge upon poor Robin Goodfellow ?

TITANIA.

Ah, merry sprite ! I think I could not find
My heart so hard,—though in extremest rage
At your most mischievous prank,—to give you up
To Master Spider. Ho ! my fairies, ho !
Hunt in the grotto by the bubbling spring ;
For there, an hour ago, I saw his eyes,
Eight fiery, blood-red embers, glare at me ;
And, in affright, ran hastily away.
Hie to the hunt ! Brave foresters, entrap
His many-jointed legs and savage claws
Fast in your nets ; beware his crescent fangs ;

And drag the hairy monster from his den,
That valiant Puck, with huge, two-handed sword,—
The keen-edged grass-blade that his art has tempered
In sun and wind till naught can turn its edge,—
May chop his head off with one mighty stroke.
Come, Oberon ; and guard me with thy sword :
And when our Puck hath slain his enemy,
I know a dell deep in the tangled wood
Where wild flowers bloom, and the down-darting moon-
beams
Are broken to a shower of silver light :
There by the flash of lustrous glow-worm torches
And thousand lanterns of bright fire-flies' shine
We'll waste the night in joyous revelry,
Dance merrily the happy hours away ;
And there thou shalt forget my jealousy.

[*The FAIRIES dance and sing. Some of the elves weave a bower for TITANIA, while others form into military lines, and march before her, preparatory to their expedition against Master Spider.*]

FAIRIES.

Fairy fingers deftly twine
Apple buds, and eglantine,
Purple orchis, ivy green,
With golden butter-cups between—
Fairy fingers twine each flower
For Titania's sylvan bower.

There shall she,
Throned in queenly majesty,
Our pageant see.

Come, gay elves, at her command
Gather round your shining band ;
Golden helmets quickly don ;
Silver shields put briskly on ;
Let each warrior elf be dressed
With tossing plumes and jewelled vest.

In gleaming play
Of colors gay
Form into lines of bright array,
That our queen may here behold,
Like a serpent's scales of gold,
In glittering columns fold on fold,
Our elfin ranks in march unrolled.

[*The FAIRIES disappear ; and the SPIRITS OF DREAMS are again heard singing.*]

SPIRITS OF DREAMS.

*Alas ! our short hour of dominion is ending
As the spell of soft slumber is leaving his breast ;
For our wonderful queen hath uplifted her sceptre,
And Spirits of Dreams must obey her behest.*

*O Sleep, our great sovereign, obeying your signal
All the imps, that your potency clothes with command,
Gather hastily up the bright landscapes of visions,
And shadows, and shapes of our magical land,*

*That when he awakens, our marvellous showings
With dim recollections be mingled and blent ;
And the brightness and beauty, that gayly we pictured,
Shall lose the rich tintings our Dreamland hath lent.*

SHAKESPEARE (*waking*).

Linger, O spirits of departing Dreamland !
Why must your pictures fly my waking eye ?
Lo, I will pay your sovereign loving homage
If yet your wondrous scenes and shapes will stay !—
Dreams—they are but realities despoiled
Of body and the poise that judgment gives,
Imagination's carnival whereat
Fancy usurps the seat of kingly Reason,
Filling the world with restless, flitting shapes.
How marvellous that broadest thoughts are there
Linked hand in hand with gay frivolities !—
Or are they only masquerading sprites
That wear wise masks to make the motley crew
With whom they revel seem the more grotesque ?
Ah ! I must banish these quaint mockeries
Lest they infect me with the taint of folly.
I will go forth from this enchanted spot
That the delicious evening may dispel
Weird recollections of the Land of Dreams.

YOUTH AND AGE.

YOUTH AND AGE.

THROUGH leaves and gently waving boughs
Of a huge and gnarled old tree
The slanting rays of the setting sun
Send dancing beams on me.

This giant with a hundred arms
Hath in its heart decay
That silently gnaws, with a wasting tooth,
Its mighty strength away.

A grand old tree in its mossy age
Though its proudest days are fled,
And the winds have torn the knotty boughs :
And some are hanging dead ;

Yet grandeur clothes the ancient oak,
And strangely whispers me
Of beauty that dwells not in graceful shapes,
Nor in pride of majesty ;

Nor strength alone is pictured here,
Though these branches long may swing
And battle with the wildest blasts
Fierce winter storms can bring:

The grandeur comes of an age antique,
For the centuries, flying past,
Behold this giant sentinel
Still standing strong and fast.

No puny life of fourscore years,
The mighty oak-tree's span:
Hundreds of years have come and gone
Since here its life began.

As softly wave the myriad leaves,
By evening zephyrs stirred,
Their gentle sighing seems to breathe
To me a pitying word:

That all my years should count so few,
Quick-speeding to the grave;
Where still the tree, as mocking me,
Above my dust may wave.

While thus I mused, a little child
Came idly straying there;
And the zephyr fanned her rosy cheeks,
And tossed her yellow hair.

Around her head, in golden rays,
I saw the sunbeams hang ;
And they turned into amber her tangled curls,
While she laughed and gayly sang.

And often she stopped her happy song
To prattle in her play,
And hug the kitten she held in her arms
In a quaint and motherly way.

She did not see me where I lay ;
But sat beneath the tree ;
And the old, old oak cast down its shade
On the head of infancy.

“ O Earth,” I cried, “ O Mother Earth,
Why doth your kindly care
Nourish for centuries the oak,
And not this infant fair ?

“ Both are your children : why on one
Such wealth of years bestow ?
And why this happy, laughing child
So soon in death lay low ?

“ I cannot solve this riddle, Earth,
And deem you kind and wise,
Unless the child hath other life
Than this beneath the skies !”

I dare not say that I have won
The secret of the oak ;
I cannot tell why long ago
Its germ of life awoke ;

Why through the mould a tiny plant,
Six hundred years ago,
Pushed its green blade in this fair vale,
A mighty tree to grow.

I dare not say that it was chance
That set the acorn here
That chance hath sent it kindly rains
And sunshine year by year.

And if, one day, its broken trunk
On this green sod shall lie,
All I can know is—it hath lived :
But not the reason why.

If then my wisdom cannot learn
The secret of a tree,
How can I think to gauge the depths
Of deeper mystery ?

To know why from this happy child
Her rippling laughter flows ?
Or why within her merry eyes
The summer sunshine glows ?

Why she shall grow from infancy,
That here so sweetly plays,
To cares and sorrows that must come
In later, sadder days ?

I cannot know why pain and woe
Must dim the happiness
That sparkles now in her glad eyes ;
Why all her artlessness

Must turn to careful, anxious thought
As fly the years away ;
Nor why her curls of amber gold
Shall change to sober gray ;

Nor why, a little later, she
Shall cease her weary breath,
And all of grace and comeliness
Depart at touch of death.

And when, old, moss-grown tree, beneath
Your branches' trembling shade,
Under the sighing of your leaves,
Her head in earth is laid,

The sunshine, then as beautiful
As now, will deck the place ;
The zephyr blow as softly then,
As now it fans her face ;

And you, old tree, more mossy grown,
Will still your branches wave,
Or silently drop leaves, your tears
Of grief, upon her grave :

And still beneath your lofty limbs
Will little children play ;
With happy laugh and merry voice
Sing childhood's hours away.

O veteran of six hundred years,
How cometh age to you ?
Doth sunshine bring the same sweet joys
As when your life was new ?

Doth still your ancient heart rejoice
When sings the summer breeze
Laden with perfume of the flowers,
And filled with hum of bees ?

Doth the loud song the robin sings
Upon your topmost bough
Wake in your many-circled heart
Its gay responses now ?

And when in hush of summer nights
Your parched leaves drink the dew,
Doth the old relish of your youth
Again come back to you ?

You have no human voice to tell
Your life's long history ;
Yet even silence half unfolds
Your heart of mystery :

Your grandeur hath a solemn air
Wherein no gladness dwells ;
The very waving of your boughs
A tale of sadness tells.

And even when gay-hearted June
Tosses your leafy sprays
With laughing winds, she wakes not mirth
As in your younger days.

But turning from your solemn age,
I look beneath you where
The little, laughing maiden sits,
With sunlight in her hair—

Sunlight that dances down to her
Your twisted boughs among—
Sunlight that floods her happy heart
While laughs her merry tongue.

There is no sadness in the notes
From her glad lips that ring ;
The piping robin stops his song
To hear this warbler sing.

O happy one, sing on ! I would
Your youth might always be ;
Forever in your heart abide
The mirth of infancy !

Although you know it not, your song,
That rings so merrily,
Hath made my cold philosophy
Seem doubly cold to me.

Why should I ponder on the ways
Of life's strange mystery ?
Or lose myself in deeps of thought
That stretch unendingly ?

Nay, rather let me gayly sing
Beneath this murmuring tree ;
And, like the sweet child, fill my heart
With happy minstrelsy !

O let me take the sunshine in,
The crimson-lighted sky,
The breath of trees, the bloom of flowers,
The brook that murmurs by !—

Take to my heart the beautiful
In childhood's simple lays,
In all the songs that Nature sings
In pleasant summer days !

O kingly-crowned Philosophy,
I beg an hour of thee :
Leave to forget thy awful truths,
To laugh with infancy,

To banish from my wearied heart
The dazzle of thy light,
Thy splendid train, thy wondrous lore,
And all thy magic might !—

Nay, darken not thy monarch brow
Into an angry frown
Because this infant's golden curls
Shine brighter than thy crown !

What though allegiance sometimes fail
Its wonted hours to thee ?
Thou hast thy sceptre, and the world,
And an eternity !

Sing, laughing child, your merry songs
Of youth and happiness,
That they may lift my heart above
The slough of weariness ;

And by their sweet and simple spells
Sweep all my years away,
That I may be a child again
To join your roundelay !

Rustle, old oak, your breezy head,
And mingle in our song!
I care not for your centuries;
I would not live so long!—

Unless old Mother Earth, twice kind,
With gift of many days,
Will give me, too, unfading youth
To sing her songs of praise.

DRAMA.

DRAMA.

[How she flourished in ancient Greece ; fell into lethargy with other of the olden arts ; slumbered for more than a thousand years ; and awakened with the dawn of a new enlightenment.]

FROM these late days of fact and science
Far adown the shadowy track
Of measured years, of buried ages,
Trace the world's dim records back ;

Beyond the time when knights adventurous,
Armed in proof with shield and spear,
Went forth to win, in tilt and tourney,
Fame's renown or lady dear—

Beyond the time when Rome's dominion
Broadly spread o'er many lands,
From Britain's wild, barbarian island
Stretching far down Afric sands—

Beyond the time when Carthage city,
Tawny queen of tropic seas,
Sent brazen beaks beyond Earth's portals,
Pillared gates of Hercules:

In land where kindred Art and Knowledge
Flourished in the olden days—
Sweet Art, her brows bound round with garlands,
Knowledge crowned with laurel bays—

In land of ancient, storied sages,
Cradle of the arts of peace,
The land of sunshine, palms, and olives,
Freedom's birthplace, classic Greece:

Ere yet Apelles' skilful pencil
Alexander's plaudits won,
Or fair Campaspe's wondrous beauty
Sweetly on his canvas shone—

In days when Phidias, king of sculptors,
Wrought in gold and ivory
Divine Athena, vine-crowned Bacchus,
Zeus' great form of majesty—

Lo! here we stay our backward journey,
Resting in the mythic time
When art and glory's inspiration
Lighted Hellas' sunny clime.

Then Drama, Art's fair younger sister,
 Crowned and buskined, proudly came
 To paint the throbbing hopes and passions
 Filling human hearts with flame.

Her hand, blood-spotted, held a dagger,
 Typical of mortal strife ;
 Her brow serene and eye uplifted
 Told of an immortal life.

At her command her mimic servants
 Swift unrolled the living scene ;
 And Passion stormed, while Pity pleaded
 Every choral chant between.

Then Æschylus, impassioned dreamer,
 Symbolized with thought profound
 The human heart, its Titan struggles,
 Grandly in "Prometheus Bound" ;

And pictured in the Delphic temple
 Agamemnon's haunted heir
 Encircled by the dread Erinnyes
 Frightful with their serpent-hair.

From those far days of ancient story
 Faintest echoes reach our ears ;
 Their arts and culture lost and buried
 Under crush and soil of years.

From savage North the wild barbarians
Swarmed on richer southern lands ;
Fair arts of Greece, the Gothic waster
Trampled with marauding bands.

In track of War came Gloom and Shadow ;
Sunk the world in night profound ;
Pale Superstition's torches only
Cast their lurid glare around.

At last upon this night of shadows
Broke the cheerful light of morn ;
In northern skies the glory brightened
As a better day was born.

Too late for Greece this second dawning :
Art nor glory lingered there ;
Through colder airs of harsher climate
Shone the light of morning fair.

And when the days began to brighten
Art and Knowledge came once more ;
And Poesy her golden numbers
Sought to measure as of yore.

Then Drama, waking from her slumber,
Snatched with sacrilegious hand
A holy taper from the altar,
Rousing all her sleeping band.

At summons of their ancient mistress
 Mime and mimic joined her train ;
 But masks and robes that once they played in
 Now the mummers sought in vain.

And loud they shouted "Chorus ! chorus !"
 Down the slumberous halls of time,
 Until sad voices sang responsive,
 Faintly like a far-off chime,

"No more—no more shall swell the measure
 Of our solemn choral train—
 No more shall maidens, old men, matrons
 O'er your imaged woes complain."

At first fantastic in their sporting
 Drama's servants mocked at art,
 While tragic scenes were dressed in motley,
 And the clown usurped each part.

But Drama sought the aid of Genius,
 Who evoked a glorious band
 That wrought for her a world of fancies
 Bright as scenes of Fairyland :

While sage Philosophy endowed her
 With rich wealth of student lore,
 Until her mimic life was rounded
 As it ne'er had been before.

THE GOLDEN WEDDING.

THE GOLDEN WEDDING.

THERE'S flowery youth and vigor's prime ;
But later comes a golden time

 Good lives to crown.

April and May are rich in song ;
Summer in glory sweeps along ;

 But Autumn brown

Hath all the fruitage of the year ;
Its golden sheaves are gathered here.

Ring, wedding-bells ! ring on the air
Joys to the newly-wedded pair !

 Life's day begun,

 The cheerful sun

Before them gilds the pleasant way
With all the hopes of morning gay ;

 But life expands

The morning into fuller day ;

 And duties come with broader claims

 And all the soul's diviner aims

 And high commands.

Now, darkening o'er the happy years,
Comes chastening Sorrow with her tears
 To purify.

When cruel Fate hath torn away
A treasured hope, how piteously
The wounded heart in grief doth cry,
 " Now let me die !"

But as the sunshine's crimson streak
Through rifts of cloud will often break
 With promise fair,
So trustful Faith sends cheerful light
Through saddest gloom of sorrow's night
 To kindle there,

In hearts that each on each can rest,
The safest comfort for each breast.

And life demandeth much of toil
And hearts and hands to join the while
 In earnest aims.

Albeit not always proud success
May come life's faithful work to bless ;
 Yet labor claims,

In consciousness of duties done,
Although no shining goal be won,
Its dues of present happiness.

But purest pleasures come at last
To those whose noon of life is past ;
 And happily

Still hand in hand in trust complete,
Who journey on the end to meet ;
 The while they see,
In newer lives around their way,
Themselves as in a younger day ;
 And youth's glad song,
Ringing through halls of memory,
 Calls up a throng
Of bright-eyed hours and songs they sung
In the old days when they were young.

The young have never time to know
 Their happiness :
As bees disport from flower to flower,
Tasting of sweetness hour by hour
 In mad excess ;
So giddily their rounds they go
Until some harsh and pitiless season drives
Them,—as the honey-seekers to their hives,—
 To memories
Which all unconsciously they stored
 For later days.
In youth's wild fever, joy and pain
Are mingled in hot heart and brain ;
 But age is free
To call its pleasures back again,
To taste the sweets, reject the pain,
 In memory.

Time's yearly rounds,
Since the glad sounds
Of merry bells their wedding told,
Have half a century o'er them rolled
To crown their lives with virtue's gold
And jewels rare
Beyond compare
Brighter than those that monarchs wear.

O Time ! I pray,
With gentlest sway,
Bid your obedient hours delay ;
Nor hurry with quick feet away ;
That these may pluck the fruits of years :
Their sheaves are bound, well-filled the ears ;
Their work is done,
The harvest won ;
O may the evening twilight long
Its golden gleams for them prolong !

THE FOUNTAIN.

[Read at the presentation, by Mr. James W. Paxton, of a bronze fountain to the city of Wheeling, November 9, 1878.]

IN mad career
Are dancing here
The spirits of the water :
Quaint shapes appear to laugh and jeer
As down the bright drops patter.
In hollow way
Beneath the clay
Their tinkling feet have run,
To greet the day with frolic play,
Up-leaping to the sun.

These elves have fled
Ohio's bed
To grace our jubilee,
To gayly trip with fairy tread,
And caper airily—

Hark how they cry,
As forth they fly,
“Thanks to the one who gave
This gleaming stairway to the sky,
And winged the shining wave!”

Here cunning Art
Hath done her part,
Obedient to the will
And generous thought of his large heart
Who gave to us her skill.
And beauty's queen
Herself is seen,
Greek Venus the divine,
Half hid by screen of falling sheen,
A veil of crystalline.

As pure and white
The waters bright
In crystal streams outpour,
Their sparkles write, in words of light,
This legend evermore:
“Who stops to drink
Upon the brink
Of our o'erflowing brim
Need never think his lips should shrink
From what we pour for him.

“ No poison foul
Is in our bowl
To madden heart and brain ;
No wicked bane to kill the soul,
And fill each sense with pain.
Fly from the charms
And baleful harms
Round maddening cups that cling,
To soothing calms and healing balms
That our pure waters bring !”

If we may count
This noble fount
Such lesson unto all,
Long may its sparkling waters mount,
Till Folly's weakest thrall,
Cleansed of the stain
Of sin and pain,
Shall bless his honored name,
Whose talisman hath burst his chain,
Redeemed a life from shame !

THE DEATH OF THE YEAR.

WASTED and broken by December days,
Dying the Old-Year lay :
Upon his brow the firelight's ruddy blaze
Painted a mock of health with crimson rays
In weird, fantastic play—

A mock of health ; for his last sun
Had set,
And his last hour begun ;
And what of life was lingering yet
Seemed rather a vague dream of what had been
Than a reality.

Upon his face in deep, expressive lines was seen
Each flash of memory
As early days came back to him,
Glad infancy
And youth with lusty limb
And lustier heart to do, to hope, to dare.
Before his eyes were strangely pictured there

In changeful visionings
Springtime's imaginings—
Fulfilled?—Alas! the hopes youth brings
To the fresh heart and the sweet songs it sings
 Of happiness
Are but the flush that its own beauty flings
 On life.

But later visions to the Old-Year came,
 His months' swift strife:
Not what he hoped with his young heart aflame
 And fervor's fire;
But what his days permitted him to do,
Too little of the noble, great, and true
 To which good hearts aspire—
Too much that sad Regret with many anxious fears
Still seeks to wash away in her repentant tears.

Now on the Old-Year's face
The struggle grew apace
As life's o'erwearied race
 Drew near an end;
And fantasies
With memories
 Were seen to blend.

"Where are my hours?" he cried,
"Have they all left my side?"

My golden hours ! my warrior hours !
Lo, now I summon all my powers !—

O World, you yet shall feel

The Present hath a hand of steel ;
And death, disaster, earthquake, woe
May yet, upon my bidding, go !
These still obedient on me wait ;
Nor this last hour of life too late
To launch the bolt of adverse fate,
And fairest hopes to desolate !

“ But no ;

I will not, like a tyrant, go ;
But peacefully resign
The sceptre that is mine
To him
Whose reign will soon begin.
Already at the gate he cries
For entrance ; and the Old-Year dies
As the New-Year comes in.”

ODE TO SHAKESPEARE.

FROM the Elizabethan time
Comes down to us your verse sublime.

A playwright? ay:

Your minstrelsy

A poorer word might glorify—

A playwright on whose deathless stage

Man speaks to men his embassy—

His embassy?—of what? from whence?

Life's purpose breathed from soul and sense.

Philosophies,

Your sophistries

Seem to us doubtful mockeries

When at the Bard of Avon's high command

Life's careful masks drop from each passionate hand.

Love's blissful flames ecstatic

Burn in two hearts reciprocal

When Juliet,

Fair amoret,

Breathes from her balcony's parapet

Her young heart's dream, to the round moon confessed,
A tender tale that finds an echo in each breast.

Ambition's baleful fires succeed :
Though Pity weep each cruel deed
 No tears arise
 In Gloster's eyes
 At murder's shrieking sacrifice.
Alike to him youth's tender years,
Henry's weak age, or Anne's sad tears ;

He sees alone the diadem,
The regal throne that he must win.
 Red deeds are done ;
 The prize is won ;
 A bloody crown his brow upon—
A bloody crown he soon must yield
On fatal Bosworth's haunted field.

The blasted heath ; the fateful three ;
Once more ambition's history—
 'Gainst powers of hell,
 O souls, fight well ;
 Your fond desires are demons fell.
Alas, ill-fated, guilty, haunted pair ;
Vaulting ambition ends in dread despair !

On your bare head, O crownless king,
Madness and storm their terrors fling :

Emblem of sway
You gave away,
With all its painted majesty.
O tearful lesson of disquietude,
Gray age's folly, youth's ingratitude !

Nor are you lessonless, fat wight,
Vain, bragging, swaggering, naughty knight ;
Your sprightly wit
By humor lit
Hath yet an echo sad in it,
Telling of noble powers of intellect
Sunk in the slough of vice and base neglect.

A mournful prince in sables clad
Greets Denmark's mirth with visage sad ;—
A winter night ;
A ghostly sight
That chills our hearts with strange affright ;
And sweet Ophelia's innocent, fair prime
Blasted in sorrow by another's crime—

Yet through the deeps of mystery
Gleams the great hand of destiny ;
And ethic right
Contentends with might,
Obscured, not lost, in guilt's black night,
As deadly crime its baleful influence sheds
Alike on innocent and guilty heads.

Such are your figures, poet-sage ;
Wise lessons of your busy stage.
 Your power serene
 Controls each scene,
 While over all, gay fancy's sheen
And quick imagination brightly gleam,
Painting dull life with colors of a dream.

Real and unreal : your mimicry
Seems all too true for phantasy,
 Too bright for real.
 Your shapes ideal,
 The natural and spiritual,
Blend into poetry ; o'er which the light
Of your grand genius pours its radiance bright.

THE BEAUTY OF AGE.

THERE's beauty in a happy child,
Within whose merry, laughing eyes
A world of joy and wonder lies,
And wayward fancies free and wild.

There's beauty in the bloom of youth
When hopes o'erflow the heart elate
That courts fair Fortune, fears not Fate,
Rejoicing in its honest truth.

There's beauty in strong manhood's might
That marches on through all alarms,
That boldly meets a world in arms,
And bravely battles for the right.

But nobler beauty rests with Age :
In the calm face and thoughtful eye
Of him whose purpose broad and high
Proclaims the wisdom of a sage.

No more the worrying faults of life
Excite his heart to transient rage ;
His soul hath read the world's broad page,
And soars above each petty strife.

Although the din be round him still,
And noise and trouble thunder on,
His heart a talisman hath won
To guard him, safe from every ill.

A pure and calm serenity
Lights up his venerable face,
Where every line grows into grace,
And tells of sweet benignity.

And tender memories, too, are there,
That fourscore years have harvested,
And saintly shadows of the dead,
And angel visions pure and fair.

And if some harsher lines appear,
The battle-scars of fiercest strife,
They tell that in the ranks of life
He bled beneath Misfortune's spear.

The crown of Age his virtues bring—
A crown whose jewels are his deeds ;
If these be bright, their worth exceeds
The glittering circlet of a king.

Say not the glory of a life
Shines upon manhood's middle days ;
The light that on its evening plays
With fairest promises is rife.

It tells of tranquil pleasures here,
The end and aim of manhood won,
A weary journey well-nigh done,
And heavenly solace drawing near.

ALFRED TENNYSON.

HIS artist hand unlocks the silver gates
Of song; and the glad syllables, set free,
Leap gayly forth in lightsome liberty;
Yet each obedient on the master waits
To bear the thought his poesy creates.
Nor like Pandora's elves these wanderers be;
But move in marshalled lines of minstrelsy,
Each in fair measure with harmonious mates.
Sometimes they laugh like mountain brooks at play;
Or sing voluptuous strains of melody;
Or through dark forest-paths with Enid stray;
Or dance like fairies round an elfin ring;
Or chant deep anthems as the pine-tops swing;
Or sigh with lone CEnone life away.

ON
THE DEATH OF BAYARD TAYLOR.

His work is done, not finished ; like a song
Hushed in the midst of grandest symphony—
Hushed upon lips that seemed so brave and strong
We dreamed not death would stay their harmony.
Although no more his living voice may sing
Accustomed measures of sweet minstrelsy ;
Although no more on our pleased ears will ring
New music of that harp whose witchery
So long hath charmed us ; yet there still remains,
Haunting the air with unforgotten strains
Of harmony, a living memory
Which tells us, a true poet cannot die :
His songs immortal still the years defy
With echoes sweet of winsome melody.

NIGHT.

[*In the streets.*]

SILÉNCÉ:—save when upon his nightly beat
A watchman, or belated traveller,
Or, staggering home, a midnight reveller
Wakens the echoes with his noisy feet—
Shadows in nooks and corners of each street
Where the faint gaslight's vague, uncertain glimmer
Makes every straggling patch of gloom the dimmer;
While denser blackness in each dark retreat
Seems like the den of strange, imagined creatures
Of city crime: and half we look to see
Mysterious forms emerging from the gloom,
Until each shadow shapes in it the features
Of haunting fears, or grows at length to be
A spectre pointing ghostly hands of doom.

NIGHT.

[*In my chamber.*]

THE bells ring midnight on my drowsy ear ;
Yet not in unison. As one by one
Their clamors die away till all are done,
Still in my heart their dying tones I hear ;
While the great rush of time seems now more near,
And its swift course more solemnly to run
Under the darkness, than beneath the sun
And daylight's noisy, honest-hearted cheer.
While now my chamber walls are hung with gloom
Fancy climbs upward through the realm of night
To a far country in whose golden light
Imagination's fairest flowers may bloom—
Or spirits of the darkness downward peer ;
And Night is peopled with vague shapes of fear.

BOOKS.

WHAT though I hear upon my window-pane
The dreary dashing of December rain,
And all beyond my little, bright domain
Is black and cheerless ! Darkness threatens in vain ;
For here are friends whose counsel and whose store,
A lavish wealth, is freely given to me ;
Nor do they frown although I ask for more,
Unsatisfied with prodigality.

My books are friends and servants always true :
Though cold the world, their kindly pages glow
With generous thoughts ; while Fancy's genial crew
Leap from the lines, dull cares to overthrow.
And if I love some favored one the best
No pangs of jealousy disturb the rest.





